

FOR ALUMNI OF  
THE ACADEMIC  
CAMPUS OF  
VIRGINIA  
COMMONWEALTH  
UNIVERSITY

# SHAFFER

## COURT

### CONNECTIONS

SUMMER 1994



Business  
Alumni—  
Life in the  
Fast Lane



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**SUMMER 1994**

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*Shafer Court Connections is a magazine for alumni and friends of the Academic Campus of Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond. VCU is a public, urban university with an enrollment of 21,000 students on the Academic and Medical College of Virginia Campuses. The magazine is published three times a year by VCU Alumni Activities.*

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# VCU

Virginia Commonwealth University

COVER ILLUSTRATION BY KERRY TALBOT '88BFA/A

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# AHS

Thank you! thank you! As an alumna of VCU, I was thrilled to receive the new alumni magazine. I love the format, the color, the articles, the photos—it is a truly good alumni publication. I really like the “What’s New” page 32—it made me feel that you really did want to know what’s been happening.

It’s wonderful to see a publication that recognizes the strengths of our university. My thanks to the entire staff for a job more than well done.

**Sherry Deems ’72BFA ’93MFA/A**

Great magazine!

**Charles H. Wood ’64BS/B**

I wanted to tell you how great the new publication was. “Awesome” as my children say. I know you spent a tremendous amount of time and energy to pull this makeover together and it sure looks like it was worth the effort. Great job to the staff. Keep up the good work.

**Lou Brooks ’77BFA/A ’82BS/AH**

*From our email file:*

Congratulations! The Shafer Court Connections arrived yesterday and it looks great. Best wishes from Phil and me.

**Edith Brenner ’78BFA/A**

I think the new format of the alumni magazine is terrific. Keep up the good work!

One comment. I would like to see an article on the Greek system on campus. In addition, some commentary pertaining to West Coast alumni.

**Dwayne C. King ’84BS/C&PA**

*We have been thinking about West Coast alumni, too. Watch for the cover story in the Fall issue on VCU Alumni who’ve “gone Hollywood.”*

Three cheers for the first issue of *Shafer Court Connections*! You and your colleagues have captured the spirit of VCU’s Academic Campus and its RPI heritage in grand fashion. The School of Education’s 30th anniversary feature portrays us very well through our alumni and faculty. I look forward to future issues of SCC.

**John Oehler  
Dean, School of Education**

I am an alumna who is listed in the AlumNet section of *Shafer Court Connections*.

I enjoyed the magazine very much, but my problem is that the information about me was sent to alumni activities about a year ago. I was just disappointed that old information was used without confirmation.

Thanks for publishing your email address! I think that’s great!

**Lori Blackmon ’83BA/H&S**

*Redesign slowed us down; we hope to stay more current. Lori updated us by email for AlumNet, a fast route for those on “the net.”*

I wanted to say a couple of things, the first of which is that the new *Shafer Court* looks pretty good. The same useful information is there, packaged in a much more useful and enjoyable format. Good luck as your editorship goes forward.

Secondly, have you ever thought about setting up an electronic version of the magazine, plus other functions for alumni (a site for news of events, announcements; an emailing list), using the Internet? I admit it’s much less likely that I would respond to the latest issue if I couldn’t use my PC and email to do so.

As you note in the magazine, 88 percent of readers surveyed were in favor of recycled paper. Email doesn’t use any paper and would allow for more frequent dissemination of news. And by eliminating paper versions of material, printing and postage costs could be saved.

**Dennis O’Connell ’78BS/MC**

*We are indeed thinking about going online with the magazine, perhaps by the fall issue. An electronic announcement board for alumni is also an excellent idea. We’re checking into it. We still*

*need paper, of course; not all of us are wired. But we did get more response by email than U.S. mail.*

*Letters, calls, email. Keep it coming! We got some great ideas, and the kudos were really energizing. We hope you like this issue as well—and we thank you for your support. Contact us at Shafer Court Connections; VCU Alumni Activities; PO Box 843044; Richmond, VA 23284. Fax: (804) 828-0878. Email: mercer@cabell.vcu.edu.*

**New phone:**  
(804) VCU-ALUM (828-2586)

## OOPS

Corrections from our spring 1994 issue:

We failed to credit the current photo of **Jane Weaver Poulton ’47BA/H&S** on page 29 to *The News & Observer* of Raleigh, NC.

Confused by the new box number, we gave you the wrong zip code for our mailing address, which is **Shafer Court Connections, VCU Alumni Activities, PO Box 843044, Richmond, VA 23284-3044.**



## THE WAY WE WERE

It was a mild-mannered Clark Kent of a street then, with no hint of the Superhub it became. Recognize it? See page 32.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AND ARCHIVES, JAMES BRANCH CABELL LIBRARY.

The spring semester brought good news for Virginia Commonwealth University.

VCU enjoyed great success during the 1994 session of the General Assembly. Salary increases for faculty and staff and an increase in financial aid for VCU students were approved. We also held tuition increases to among the lowest at Virginia's doctoral institutions: 2.9 percent for Virginia undergraduates living on campus.

Thanks to new legislation, academic medical centers may now enter into limited joint-venture arrangements with other health groups to improve their competitive position in the managed-care market. Legislators also authorized additional support for the Massey Cancer Center Rural Outreach Program, the Generalist Physician Initiative, and family practice sites, as well as planning funds to renovate the Virginia State Library, where we hope to move the Schools of Allied Health Professions and Nursing and Tompkins-McCaw Library. Finally, in a major step for the Virginia Biotechnology Research Park, the Governor signed legislation authorizing the Biotechnology Research Act, which will regulate biotechnology activity in the Commonwealth.

The results of this legislative session mean our overall budget will increase by about 3 percent each year of the next biennium. By the end of 1995-96, our revenues will exceed \$800 million, of which only about 14 percent will represent state general fund support. For MCV Hospitals, state support for indigent care has been reduced to zero with funding now coming solely from federal Medicaid payments.

Through selected expenditure reductions, we reallocated funds in our 1994-96 budget to support several key initiatives from the university's strategic plan.

One of the most important is restructuring the administration. The Committee on Administrative Review, with assistance from an outside consultant, is examining every aspect of VCU's administration. The goal is to promote greater efficiency, and our target is to reduce our administrative costs by 15 percent — funds that we want to reinvest in long-range planning.

Another major reorganization will not only support VCU's streamlining objectives but also enhance our urban mission. A task force appointed to study the future of the School of Community and Public Affairs recommended that the school be dissolved and its departments relocated to other areas where their strengths can be exploited. I have briefed alumni of the School of Community and Public Affairs and VCU's alumni leadership on the details of the task force's report, which is covered in this issue of Shafer Court Connections.

I am pleased to report that for 1993-94 the University achieved the highest private gift support

in its history—\$24 million. That total combined with the last two years' total of \$19.7 million means VCU has raised almost \$44 million in the past three years for some of its highest priorities.

Those priorities of increased funding support for our strategic plan, financial access for students, greater financial stability for MCV Hospitals, and support for selected capital and limited expansion needs will continue to guide our year-to-year budget planning.

As a timely confirmation of the progress we are making and the excellence of our programs, we recently completed a successful site visit for reaccreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). VCU received an unusually high 13 commendations and several important recommendations for areas we have targeted for improvement. These include, among others, regular evaluation of undergraduate admissions policies; incorporating changes in the general-education core designed to build competence in oral communication and mathematical skills; review of graduate programs; tying the evaluation of undergraduate instruction to improving teaching; and ensuring appropriate support for the strategic plan.

I wish all of you a safe and relaxing summer. Please continue to stay in touch with us.

EUGENE P. TRANI  
PRESIDENT



*Pitching VCU. President Eugene P. Trani (center) met in January with some of Virginia's heavy hitters in Washington. Talking with (left to right) Sen. John W. Warner, U.S. Rep. Norman Sisisky '92HLD, U.S. Rep. Thomas J. Bliley Jr. and Sen. Charles S. Robb, Dr. Trani discussed VCU's new strategy to build stronger contacts with the federal research funding community.*

COURTESY OF VCU NEWS SERVICES





DEAN HOFFMEYER

NCAA Women's Basketball Champions, North Carolina.

## WOMEN'S BASKETBALL SCORES BIG AT VCU

A quality event was augmented by a stellar moment in basketball during this year's NCAA Women's Basketball Final Four games, hosted by VCU in April. More than 12,000 cheering basketball fans filled the Richmond Coliseum as Louisiana Tech, Alabama, North Carolina and Purdue Universities' basketball teams hit the hardwood.

The weekend was a sellout



DEAN HOFFMEYER

months before the event, and it offered the university the chance to shine in the media spotlight—CBS televised the three final games nationally. The final seconds of the final game were among the most stomach-wrenching in collegiate basketball. North Carolina junior Charlotte Smith launched a three-point

shot at the buzzer to down Louisiana Tech 60-59.

The games are among a list of national athletic events hosted at VCU in recent years, including a men's NCAA Division I basketball subregional in 1990; Division I field hockey finals in 1992; and women's basketball East Regional last year. The men's basketball subregional returns in 1996.

## BROWN VS. BOARD OF EDUCATION

A recent symposium at VCU brought giants of the civil rights movement together once more. Oliver Hill, Judge Robert R. Mehrige Jr. and James Farmer stepped from the pages of history books onto a stage in the University Student Commons to mark the 40th anniversary of Brown vs. Board of Education.

The two-day symposium examined events that led to and followed the 1954 decision, which desegregated America's public schools and broke a path for future civil rights advances.

"Sometimes certain events become seminal moments in a nation's history," says Dr. Melvin Urofsky, VCU legal historian and co-organizer of the symposium. "In our time, there is probably no single event that has so shaped the contour of recent American history as the decision in Brown vs. Board of Education."

Many symposium participants were involved in the Brown case

and the civil rights movement, including: Jack Greenberg, a member of the NAACP legal team that argued the case before the Supreme Court; Farmer, the former director of the Congress of Racial Equality; Hill, a Richmond civil rights lawyer involved in the Virginia court case that was part of the Brown decision; and Merhige, who heard many of the school desegregation cases in Virginia following the Brown decision.

## ARTS PARTNERS, NEW PLAYERS AT VCU

The School of the Arts always has been active in the Richmond arts community, but a new partnership between Theatre VCU and Theatre Virginia is opening doors for the university's student artists. The music department and the Richmond Symphony also have developed an arrangement that brings the concert hall closer to the classroom.

The theater agreement brings Theatre Virginia's design and acting professionals into the classroom as guest lecturers, and opens the VCU Performing Arts Center to performance rehearsals and workshops.

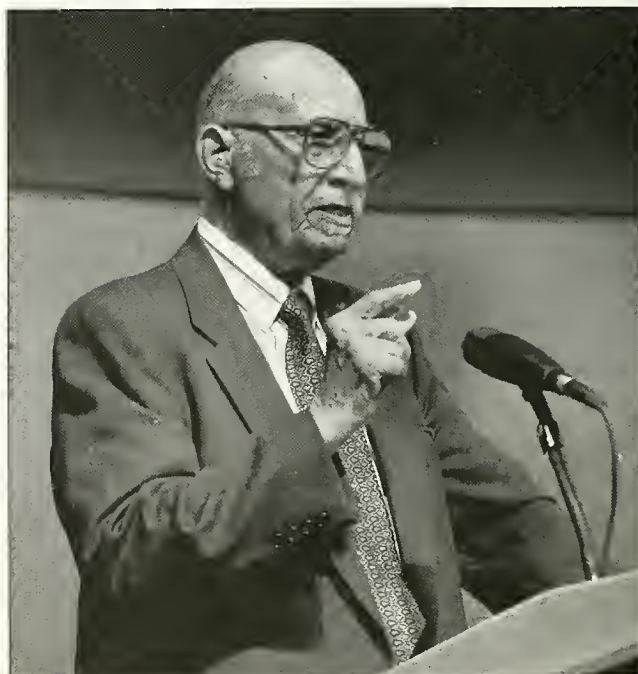
Most exciting for students is

the chance to work as understudies in Theatre Virginia plays.

"Our program's goal is to prepare our students for successful careers in professional theater," says Richard Newdick, department chairman. "Much of what is exciting and new in American theater originates in regional companies like Theatre Virginia."

In a similar arrangement with the Richmond Symphony, four members of the Richmond Symphony, the Oberon Quartet, have joined the music faculty. The arrangement is one of the few joint appointments in the country between a regional orchestra and a university, and it gives the department a chance to continue building a strong orchestral program to go with a healthy base in jazz and opera.

A primary goal is expanding the VCU Orchestra, in size and reputation. The four musicians will teach, recruit and perform at VCU. Students from other Richmond universities, such as Virginia Union University, will have the chance to play with the VCU Orchestra. A link with the Symphony's Youth Orchestras will bring gifted area high school students to play in VCU's orchestra—and perhaps they'll decide to stay in the department.



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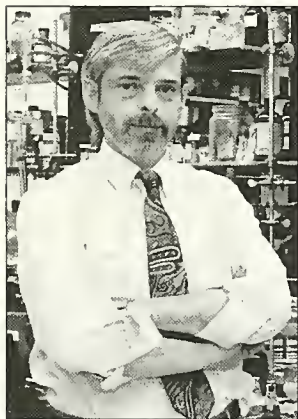
Oliver Hill at symposium on Brown vs. Board of Education.





MEDIA PRODUCTION SERVICES, VCU

**Honoring Our Own.** Faculty honored at VCU's annual Convocation in February share a collegial moment. ♦ Dr. Daniel Laskin, Award of Excellence, has done seminal research on temporomandibular disorders (TMDs) in dentistry; and he passes onto students a "blend of academic honesty, utmost regard and compassion for the patient, and a clear and concise approach to selecting treatment." ♦ Dr. Ralph Small, Distinguished Service Award, dramatically restructured the Virginia Pharmacy Association into the best in the country. ♦ Pulmonologist Dr. Paul Fairman, Distinguished Teaching Award, is a compassionate and knowledgeable expert in the medical ethics of technological support for deathly ill patients; his medical students learn to treat the patient as a whole." ♦ Novelist Paule Marshall, Distinguished Scholar Award, has brought international understanding and delight to readers and won a MacArthur Award for 1992 (left to right).



KARIN ANDERSON

## STREET CAT: VCU RESEARCHES DESIGNER DRUG

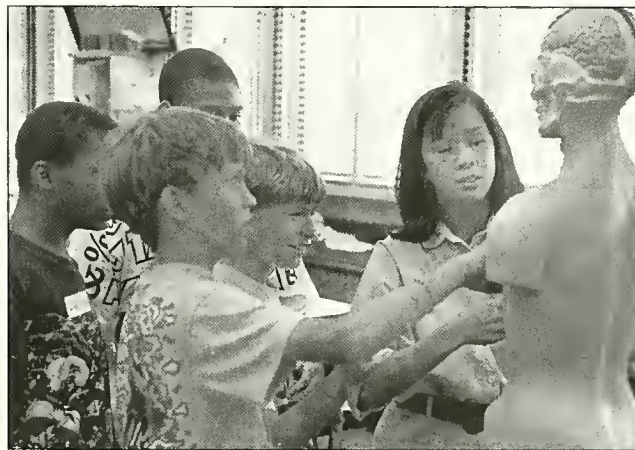
Dr. Richard Glennon, professor of medicinal chemistry, is keeping a wary eye on a new designer drug becoming ever more popular on the streets. Methcathinone (street name: Cat), is ten times more potent than cocaine, for which it is often substituted by addicts.

Glennon and his team of researchers first identified and named the drug in 1987. Since then, the inexpensive and highly-addictive drug has cropped up with growing frequency in the Midwest. Cat is a derivative of khat, a plant used in eastern

African culture for centuries as a stimulant.

"People chew the drug as a stimulant much like Americans drink coffee or tea," Glennon said. "Because the problem was centralized in eastern Africa, other world governments did not see it as a problem. But now a potent and dangerous designer form of the drug has hit other parts of the world including the United States and Russia. In fact, Cat is now the number one synthetic drug of abuse in Russia."

Glennon and his colleagues on the MCV Campus have begun to investigate how overdoses of Cat can be treated.



DOUG BUEHLER

## WE'RE NUMBER 1— IN RESEARCH

VCU's status as a national research university was bolstered by a recent report from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

The report cites VCU as one of only 88 institutions in the "Research Universities-I" category, upgrading VCU to the highest research level. Institutions in this group have broad academic missions and receive the bulk of federal research support for universities and colleges. VCU joins the University of Virginia and Virginia Tech as the only institutions in the state ranked at the Research University I-level.

"This class of universities is generally considered the state-of-the-art; they are the benchmark that all research institutions strive to reach," says President Eugene P. Trani.

The Carnegie Report, published periodically since 1973, is a key resource for campus officials, researchers and the media. U.S.

News & World Report uses the classifications as the basis of its annual ranking of "America's Best Colleges."

## GET THE LIDOCAINE!

VCU's Summer Discovery program for middle school kids brings a reprieve for parents. From June 20 through August 5, Summer Discovery offers high-level fooling around that will make both kids and their parents happy this summer. A typical day, 8:30-5:00, includes morning and afternoon classes followed by a late afternoon swim.

Last year's exposure to "A Week in Medicine" really took. Middle schoolers used med school computer simulation to practice surgery—"Quick, get the lidocaine!" They watched the anatomy program, fascinated, as layers of epidermis peeled back to reveal living tissue and bone. "Cool graphics," said the video game vets.

Among this summer's 26



DOUG BUEHLER

choices are mystery solving, African American culture, renewable energy, computer or video art and animation, drawing, sculpture and fashion design. The cost is \$100 a week plus fees for some classes, and scholarships are available.

Brochures are available for mail-in registration. Call Patricia Worley in VCU's Division of Continuing Studies and Public Service at (804) 828-1831.

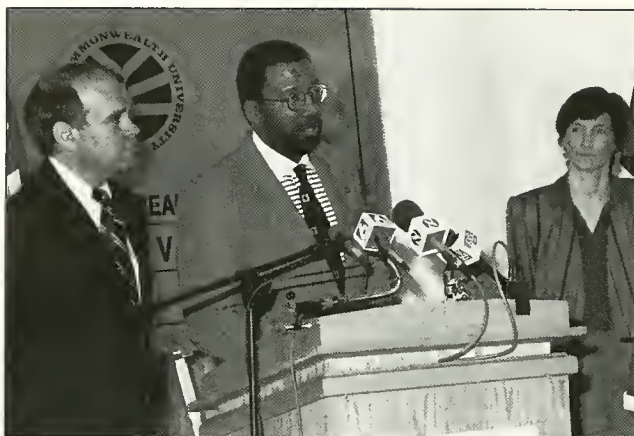


## OPENING DOORS FOR RICHMOND TEENS

Richmond politicians and civic leaders recently demonstrated a personal commitment to help at-risk youth overcome cycles of poverty and violence. The One to One Mentor Development Program at VCU held a training session for mentors of adolescents in the City of Richmond Juvenile Court System. City Manager Robert Bobb, Attorney Susan Hepner, Commonwealth's Attorney David Hicks and former U.S. Attorney Richard Cullen were among trainees who will work with Richmond teens as part of the city's Weed and Seed program.

"When I was asked to participate in this program I had to reach a critical decision, personally, because I'm trying to raise my own boys and keep up with my busy schedule," said Bobb. "The survival of Richmond's young people really represents the survival of the entire metropolitan area."

"This mentoring program is representative of the types of real-



MEDIA PRODUCTION SERVICES, VCU

world solutions our center can implement to help address pressing urban concerns," says Dr. Robert Holsworth, co-director of the Virginia Center for Urban Development at VCU.

The training session was developed by the Center and the local affiliate of One to One, a national initiative in 10 cities, including New York, Detroit and Los Angeles. Dr. Cathy Howard, assistant professor of psychology, is co-director of the Mentor Development Program at VCU. (Cullen, Bobb and Howard are left to right in photo.)

## MOVING IMAGES, STRANGE FILMS

Independence was the watchword at the first James River Festival of the Moving Image, sponsored in April by the departments of art history and photography and film. Thanks to faculty co-chairs Michael Jones and Joan Strommer, 1500 happy Richmond moviegoers reveled in a slew of independent films that took their own shots at the human condition—absurd, whimsical, wild, or touching.

The festival also brought "dog artist" William Wegman to VCU. Wegman, famous for his videos, photographs and drawings featuring his Weimaraner dogs, was the festival's guest artist. He hosted

# LIVE AT VCU



COURTESY OF CORNELL WEST

"I want white Americans to stop experiencing black Americans vicariously through Oprah and Arsenio. We must realize that we are in this thing together whether you are driving a Mercedes or a Volkswagen. We are in the same boat and there's a leak in it."

**CORNELL WEST**, author of *Race Matters*, and professor of religion and director of African-American Studies at Princeton University, Community Learning Week at VCU in January.



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"Don't be fooled into believing that when laws change attitudes will as well. It's not true. Each generation finds its own reason to hate. We must begin to ask. We must begin to tell. But most importantly we must listen."

**LANI GUINIER**, professor of law at University of Pennsylvania, Community Learning Week at VCU in January.



MEDIA PRODUCTION SERVICES, VCU

"Conjoined twins are special people who often are better defined by their resilient spirits than by their unusual physical conditions."

**DR. JOHN M. TEMPLETON JR.** '73M pediatric surgeon at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Inaugural John M. Templeton Jr MD Lecture in Pediatric Surgery at the MCV Campus in March. Templeton donated \$50,000 to endow the lecture series.



tions we've had is that we are now being broadcast by a university radio station in Tennessee."

The show typically involves two guests in half-hour discussions, which have ranged from science and social responsibility to reforming national health care. VCU faculty who've been guests include Dr. Louis Rossiter, director of VCU's Health Policy and Research Division, and Paul Keve, professor emeritus of justice and risk administration.

"With Good Reason" airs weekly on five public radio stations: WCVE-FM in Richmond on Saturdays at 1 pm; WETS-FM in Johnson City, Tennessee, on Tuesdays at 7:30 pm; WHRV-FM in Hampton Roads on Tuesdays at 11 am; WMRA-FM in Harrisonburg on Sundays at 4:30 pm; and WVTF-FM in Roanoke and Charlottesville on Tuesdays at 7:30 pm. Student radio stations at Virginia State University and Norfolk State University also air the program.

So turn on your radio, tune in and listen up.



DOUG BUEBLEIN



DOUG BUEBLEIN

## READY, SET, THINK!

Slip Donald and Marla Trump into a retelling of *The Iliad* or build a structure out of balsa wood that can hold more than 700 pounds. More than 900 elementary, middle and high school students from across Virginia spent a day at VCU scratching their heads over teasers like these, competing in *Odyssey of the Mind*. State director Susan Nunnemaker '65BS/H&S '68MED/E

explained that the competition tests creativity and quick-thinking in subjects from myth to math. Nunnemaker hopes that a taste of VCU will tempt some of these gifted kids to return someday as students. State winners went on to the world competition in June in Ames, Iowa.



DOUG BUEBLEIN



MEDIA PRODUCTION SERVICES, VCU

"Unfortunately, the situation in Russia is going from bad to worse. It is true that the structure needed some reforms, but instead of reforms, [it was] just demolished."

**GENNADIY ZYUGANOV**, chairman of the re-established Communist Party of the Russian Federation (above left, with VCU sociologist Dr. Lynn Nelson and President Trani), speaking to VCU faculty in April.



ACTION PHOTO CO. INC.

"Sunny with a chance of showers. (I really don't know anything about the weather.)"

**WILLARD SCOTT**, weatherman for NBC's "Today Show" (right, with Jason Laney, WWBT-TV Richmond), inductee to the Virginia Communication Hall of Fame of the School of Mass Communications in April.

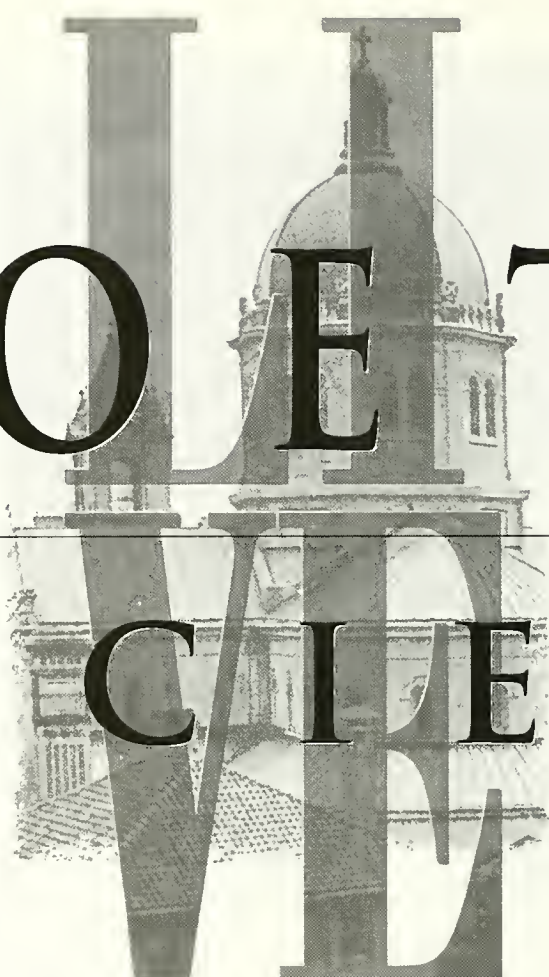


COURTESY OF WILLIAM WEGMAN

"My video work can be likened to Plato's *Dialogues*, only my work is primarily with dogs. According to Plato, art had no place in his ideal society. In mine, it would be right near the top. In my society, dogs would be allowed to ride on buses and trains like they do in Holland."

**WILLIAM WEGMAN**, artist (with collaborator Fay Ray), James River Festival of the Moving Image in April.





# POETS SOCIETY

THEY  
SEIZE

THE  
DAY  
~  
WORD  
BY  
WORD

BY ANNETTE OVERTON-MCGRATH

Sitting on the couch in Larry Levis' office, you can see the green dome of the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart with birds flying past it. It could be a view of an old European city. A natural place for three working poets to gather to talk about living by the word and how the MFA program has sheltered and nourished each of them. Richmond is not Paris. You can not spend long hours in sidewalk cafes discussing art. There has to be a place. For many, VCU is it.

The MFA Program in Creative Writing is 10 years old, begun by English professor Maurice Duke. Levis, a poet with an international reputation, is the current director. Last fall he succeeded Greg Donovan, who has taught in the program since 1983 and directed and built it from 1985-93. Donovan continues to teach and is working closely with alumni on a couple of projects to strengthen the program. (See note.)  
**Jeannette Drake '76MSW/SW**

'91MFA/H&S took her first class in 1983, followed by one class each semester for seven years, until she received her degree. The slow boat to commitment. But now she is totally immersed in writing, having quit her job as a social worker.

To illustrate one of the key reasons why poets do what they do, Levis cites William Carlos Williams who once wrote, "It is difficult to get the news from poems yet men die miserably every day for lack of what is found there."

*Why join an MFA program in creative writing?*

**LEVIS:** "In our country, MFA programs have been becoming enormously important in this sense because there are now places where young writers can go and find other writers and share energy and get some guidance with an actual living writer or poet who's teaching there...I think if you look now at novelists or



poets who are doing interesting work in this country, who are being well published, well reviewed, I suspect that at least two-thirds of them have been in, at one point in their lives, in a writing program. In the early '60s, it was fashionable to say, 'I was a longshoreman or a wildcatter and so forth,' and maybe those people all were, but I think those people also took workshops at Stanford and San Francisco State."

**DONOVAN:** "A great number of students are people who have had careers before. A great number have been journalists, many people like Jeannette have already had full lives before they ever come into the MFA program. It's not really a place for hothouse flowers.

"When I was out at the University of Utah, (poet) Diane Wakoski came to visit and she pompously and self-righteously said we should all go out and get jobs as garbage workers or something. She was talking to a farmwife, a Vietnam veteran, myself who was a construction worker/housepainter. All of us in there had done all those things, and we wanted to be in the MFA program."

**LEVIS:** "I think that workshops have always gone on. You might think of Ezra Pound showing Ford Madox Ford some of his poems. Ford Madox Ford found the poems so antique, so absolutely unmodern, so ridiculous that he rolled off the couch and rolled around on the floor of his apartment in gales of laughter at Pound's early work. Pound said, 'that laughter saved me two years of work in the wrong direction.' Whether it's institutionalized or not, that's a poetry workshop.

"Unlike in France, if you're a poet, wherever you are, you go to Paris. And you meet people in cafes and someone might like your work and you get a sinecure in an art museum, something to tide you over... Our country's too big and I think that's why you have the proliferation of writing programs...I don't think there is a poetry mecca, and I don't think there is a capital of the world—anymore."

**DONOVAN:** "It's diffuse. There are plenty of centers where you can go and

you know there will be plenty of poets around."

**DRAKE:** "I lived in California a couple of years ago and I happened to be in a little cafe in Berkeley and they were having a poetry reading, and I said, 'Oh, I'm from Virginia. I just happen to have some poems.' And it was OK. They accepted me as if I lived around the corner. I think Greg is right. There are many pockets where a poet can find a place to be."

**DONOVAN:** "I think most of our students—and I certainly felt this way about being in a writing program myself—they go to those places because they feel that the rest of the world thinks they're mighty strange and in some sense inexplicable. In a writing program they not only make sense but they're challenged to be better. That's what they want above all."

*Didn't generations of American writers prosper without MFA degrees?*

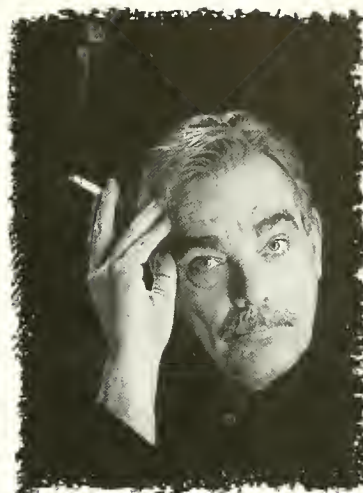
**LEVIS:** "Hemingway learned to write by being a journalist..."

**DONOVAN:** "And talking to Gertrude Stein."

**LEVIS:** "And talking to Gertrude Stein, Fitzgerald and Pound and other people. You know, the little workshop over in Paris. But that was a different time, it seems to me, when Lawrence could go to Italy or Mexico and simply live there."

**DRAKE:** "I think one of the things that happens, if you go to an MFA program and you're working with other people, what you're doing becomes validated. That's the most important thing that could happen. If you don't workshop with someone, you could sit in the corner and continue to write for 50 years and never have anywhere to publish, but you need to share with people who know more than you do."

**DONOVAN:** "This program, as opposed to some other places, has a tradition, which the students developed themselves, but also it's not by accident,



Larry Levis



Jeannette Drake



Greg Donovan



## VCU WRITES!

Books and prizes of faculty, alumni and students of VCU's MFA Program in Creative Writing

## P O E T R Y

Greg Donovan *Calling His Children Home*—winner of 1993 Devins Award.

### Jeannette Drake '76MSW/SW

'91MFA/H&S Poems in *The Southern Review*, *New Virginia Review*, *Callalo*, *Obsidian*. Writing awards from Virginia Commission on the Arts 1992, 1993.

Larry Levis *Black Freckles*, *The Widening Spell of the Leaves*, *The Dollmaker's Ghost*, *The Afterlife*, *The Wrecking Crew*. Senior Fulbright, Yugoslavia 1988; U.S. Award, International Poetry Forum 1971; others.

### Elizabeth Seydel Morgan '86MFA/H&S

*The Governor of Desire*, *Parties*. Emily Clark Balch Award 1991.

Gary Sange *Sudden Around the Bend*.

Ron Smith '85MFA/H&S *Running Again in Hollywood Cemetery*.

## F I C T I O N

### Dennis Danvers '89MFA/H&S *Wilderness*.

Tom De Haven \**The Last Human*, \**The End-of-Everything Man*, *Pixie Meat* (with Gary Panter and Charles Burns), \**Walker of Worlds*, *Sunburn Lake*, *Joe Gosh*, *U.S.S.A.*, *Funny Papers*, *Jersey Luck*, *Freaks' Amour*. \*Translations in five languages.

Stephen Fleming '86MFA/H&S *The Exile of Sergeant Nen*.

## P L A Y S , S C R I P T S

Tom De Haven Film scripts: *Jersey Luck*, *Kaduna Memories*; Graphic Novel Scripts: *Nightmare Alley*, *Goldfish*, *Neuromancer* (adapted from William Gibson's work); also TV animation and an interactive fiction computer game.

Lydia Stryk *The Music Hall*, *Monte Carlo*, *Mercy*, *The Secret Journal of Desiree Von Wertheimsten*, *The Fine Things in Life*. Finalist for the Kennedy Center Prize.

Two MFA students won national awards from the Associated Writing Programs in 1993. Louis Abbey's poem, "The Little Goat—Jean Bertrand Aristide" and Mary Lou Hall's story "Luna" won Introd Journals Awards which include publication.

—M.E.M.

students are primarily supportive of each others' work. The cutthroat competitiveness model exists in other places, built into the structure, but we did not build that into the structure of VCU's program...Teachers and students recognize each person is developing as they must, and that can't be predicted or forced. The competition happens before they get here."

DRAKE: "There's a lot of support. I've always found there was a lot of support."

*If there were none of the obscure little literary magazines dotting the country, where would the venue of poetry be?"*

DONOVAN: "There wouldn't be one."

DRAKE: "Well, I think people would go out on the street corners and recite."

LEVIS: "Absolutely, I think they would. Most of it would happen in a situation like Sammisdat, like you have in Poland, where people are mimeographing poems and passing them around to each other. In the kind of situation where you have people composing rap music, rap songs as they walk down the street. Because the impulse toward poetry is very deep. It's in all cultures and it's very old. If you don't have access to poetry in the printed medium, then the culture will still find a way to express it."

DRAKE: I heard Alan Ginsburg say the other night on TV that there was a resurgence of poetry readings. And that seems to me that it's also related to what Maya Angelo said when Charlie Rose asked her about the most important words of her inauguration poem for Clinton. She said those two words were 'good morning,' and it has to do with people reconnecting. So even if we have the Information Superhighway whatever, I think that Larry is right that people will find pockets where they can go and read to each other. People need to connect."

*What are readings like for you?*

DRAKE: "I love reading."

DONOVAN: "It's a way to have a very unusual opportunity to get an immediate response to the things you're doing. By and large, audiences for poetry are made up primarily by people who care a lot about it. So, when you deliver a clunker line, you usually feel the silence. And when you deliver an extraordinary line, you sense that there's an energized quality to the people."

LEVIS: "I think it's important, and I think there's a certain element of risk, of emotional risk. You're standing up there reading about you believe in. And you also learn a great deal about your own work because you can hear it when that note is flat and, oh, that's not making it."

...You know that old Hemingway quote, "this thing with the bulls is serious." Well so is this thing with the poems."

ANNETTE OVERTON MCGRATH IS AN ASSISTANT EDITOR WITH RICHMOND'S *STYLE WEEKLY* AND A FREELANCE WRITER. THIS ARTICLE FIRST APPEARED AS PART OF HER COVER STORY ON THE MFA PROGRAM IN *STYLE*, MARCH 1, 1994. THE STORY ALSO FEATURED ALUMNA ELIZABETH SEYDEL MORGAN '86MFA/H&S.

PHOTOS OF LARRY LEVIS, JEANNETTE DRAKE, AND GREG DONOVAN BY JAY PAUL '85BGS/NTS '93MFA/A REPRINTED FROM *STYLE WEEKLY*.

## *This is just to say...*

Attention, MFA alumni interested in creative writing and creative funding. Greg Donovan is working with some current students and alumni to develop an alumni and friends newsletter for the program. The group is also fundraising to create an endowment for the program to bring outstanding writers to VCU for readings and workshops. As the fund grows, they hope to give students financial support as well. Interested? Contact Greg Donovan at (804) 828-1331; email: gdonovan@hibbs.vcu.edu; or VCU English Department P.O.Box 842005, Richmond VA 23284-2005.



# JUST IMAGINE

BY JOHN SARVAY

Ask Dr. Henry McGee why he left one of the best engineering schools in the country after 23 years to start from scratch at a university with no reputation



for engineering, and you'll get an earful. McGee joined VCU in January as associate provost for the new School of Engineering. He could talk all day about the possibilities he envisions for the school.

For starters, he explains that "engineering education over the last few decades has become intensely mathe-

matrical and analytical in tone. It is my intention at VCU to attempt to balance that with a stronger orientation toward synthesis, creativity and imagination."

And, the far-seeing McGee spots a unique opportunity in Central Virginia for VCU. "Certainly, our niche will

depend on the milieu in which we find ourselves. So we will build strong relationships with the medical and biomedical components of the university. And it is my goal that the new School of Engineering relate closely to the Richmond business and industrial community."

These connections, McGee says, will distinguish VCU from Virginia Tech—whose engineering program is consistently ranked among the nation's best. "Those sorts of relationships do not exist in Blacksburg," he says. McGee stresses that the relationship with Virginia Tech will be important for both institutions. Because of its reputation, Tech will be an important name to be linked with when VCU recruits new faculty.

VCU and Virginia Tech are working together closely to develop the new school as McGee begins to shape the curriculum and mission. In discussions with Tech colleagues, a rough sketch of parameters has already emerged. About 40 faculty will teach and do research in a building of 80,000 square feet. VCU's school will feature programs in electrical engineering, mechanical engineering and



chemical engineering—but with some creative additions.

“Engineering curricula are frequently seen as straitjackets,” McGee says. Often heavy on traditional subject areas, the curriculum sometimes give short shrift to electives, especially in specialized areas that would serve the student’s professional needs—such as medicine, business or law. “It’s very common for people who graduate in engineering to further their education in those areas.” VCU’s programs are taking shape to integrate other disciplines along the way. “For example, we know that VCU’s faculty in medical sciences such as physiology and pharmacology will be involved in the school.”

A chemical engineer, McGee has held a visiting position at the National Science Foundation (NSF) for the past three years. As head of the Chemical and Transport Systems Division, he was responsible for developing research policies and identifying new scientific initiatives for eight programs with a budget of about \$35 million. Before that, McGee taught chemical engineering at Virginia Tech for 23 years, including 10 years as department chair.

“This is just a fantastic opportunity—it’s almost a unique event in American higher education—to start a new school of engineering in an already-existing university with great strengths and linked to one of the finest engineering programs in the country.”

JOHN SARVAY '94BGS/NTS IS A FREELANCE WRITER FORMERLY EDITOR OF VCU VOICE AND AN EDITOR OF CAFFEINE MAGAZINE. THIS INTERVIEW IS AN EDITED REPRINT FROM VCU VOICE FEBRUARY 21, 1994

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DENNIS MCWATERS.

# MEMBERS OF THE OLD SCHOOL

BY SANDY BRASILI

*Not everyone knows that VCU’s planned School of Engineering is not our first. We talked with alumni who earned associate’s degrees at the School of Engineering Technology in the 1960s and ’70s. “Dweebie techies” (their term) remember practical skills and look down the road from Route 66 to the information highway.*

## A BACK DOOR

Computer systems designers often leave themselves a “back door” into their programs to use in case of emergencies. For Gene Adkins ’73AS Electronics Technology says it was VCU’s engineering technology program in the early ’70s that let him “back into the computer door” through electronics. He and a few of his colleagues at Virginia Power even built a personal computer years ago, long before “PC” became part of the vernacular.

Adkins credits his VCU degree with “giving me the flexibility to move around within the field,” he says. “It was broad enough that it allowed students to go in different directions. The best way to describe the program in those days is to consider theoretical engineering, which is clean and just what the name says—theory.” He pauses, a smile breaking out. “And then there’s engineering technology, for people who, so to speak, want to get their hands dirty!”

After VCU, Adkins earned an electronics degree from Old Dominion University and went to work for Virginia Power. “My first job was to keep your circuits from getting blown away by a storm,” he laughs.

Much of his career, Adkins has focused on computer user support. A lot of that is simple explanations. “I can speak engineering and I can speak English. I often fact as a translator.”

Adkins echoes his fellow VCU alums and labels computer technology as the most expansive development over the last 20 years. “I remember when people repaired computers,” he says. “Now they just replace a circuit board and go.”





## "NOT THE ONLY GIRL"

Being one of a handful of women in technical classes full of men was "different," Nancy Estes Berry AS '69 **Drafting & Design Technology** laughs. "At least I wasn't the only girl. There were usually three or four of us in a class.

"It wasn't as bad as you might think," she continues. "Our program was unique but we got to mix with other folks in different areas of expertise. It was really broad-based. We always knew the other engineering students because we were such a small school compared with other departments."

Berry's a senior transportation engineer at the Virginia Department of Transportation's Richmond office. After 18 years, she still remembers her first assignment. "I started as a drafting tech trainee," she says, "working on cross-sections on Route 66. Anybody who's ever worked for VDOT has worked on Route 66," she laughs.

As she rose through the ranks, she became a graphic artist illustrator for the public involvement section. "I interpreted highway plans of engineers and painted them on a 16" x 20" photograph so laymen could see how the completed road would look." Now "I'm more in the research and development end of things," she says. "It's my job to make sure that we comply with all state and federal regulations for road design.

Berry observes that "when I started work, out of 200 people in my division, about five of us were women. The numbers are much larger now. The main differences I've seen in the last 20 years in this profession? Computers and the increasing numbers of women and minorities."



## MUFFLE THAT NOISE!

If you've traveled at all in Virginia, you've probably seen Robert Gibson's '70 AS **Civil & Highway Technology** '75 BS **Chemistry** handiwork. But not heard it. Gibson designs noise walls at the Richmond branch of the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT). The environmental planner's efforts are easily visible along interstate routes 295, 64 and 66 among others. He estimates that he's been responsible for \$40-\$50 million worth of the structures since he moved to VDOT's noise division in 1985.

Currently working toward his PE (professional engineer) designation, Gibson concedes that he followed an odd degree path, zigging from his associate's degree in engineering into a BS in chemistry while he worked at VDOT. "I figured I'd end up in a lab somewhere," he says, "but I liked VDOT, and it looked like there would be chances for advancement, so I just stayed on." Good planning. Gibson spent a satisfying 10 years in the air quality division before

moving on to noise.

Musing on his early training compared with current programs, he laughs and says, "I started out with slide rules. Then it was calculators. And today,

you're nowhere without a computer."



## COOL. HEH, HEH.

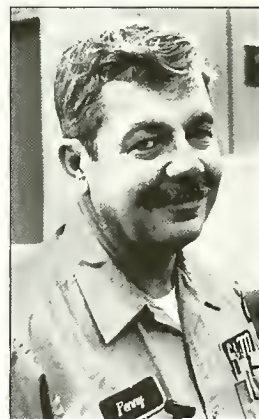
When teachers and students in Henrico County classrooms keep their cool, they should thank James Penny '72 AS **Refrigeration & Air Conditioning**. He builds and maintains heating and cooling systems for county schools. Penny has worked for the school district since receiving his associate's degree in

refrigeration and air conditioning in 1972. The Mechanicsville resident says that his training provided him with an enjoyable job that lets him travel from place to place—or school to school. However, he still wishes his program had been four years instead of two.

"This field is nothing like it was when I first entered it," Penny says. "Now energy management is all done by computers. Today, technicians had better be able to write the program that will tell the computer how to regulate a building's heating and cooling systems." Government regulation of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) is another complication. "Technicians need to know the laws exactly. Now you're learning one thing after another," he says.

Penny speaks warmly of his VCU training. "It gave me the knowledge to act as a go-between for an engineer and a mechanical contractor. I can read the specs and know what the engineer wants, but I can also explain it to the layman.

For example, if an owner is remodeling a building and wants the most efficient heating and cooling system available, an engineer can select it. But when the



owner starts questioning the blueprint, I can explain it in a language he'll understand."

"I'm proud of the program I had," he sums up.

SANDY BRASILI IS A FREELANCE WRITER WHO WAS RECENTLY A VCU NEWS SERVICES SPECIALIST





# Takin'



# Case of Business on the Information Super Highway

BY LINDA T. MILLS

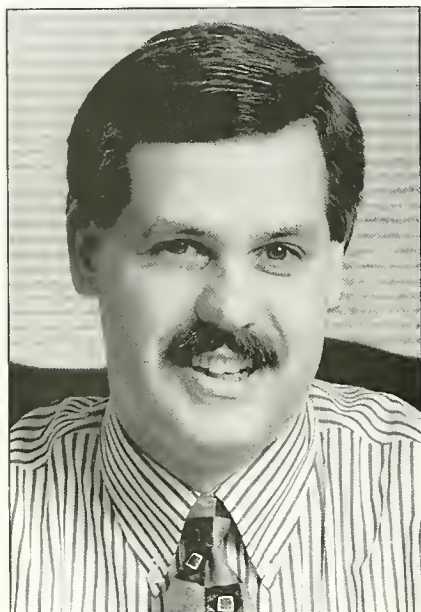
Imagine being able to talk to your computer (not just yell at it when the hard drive crashes) and have it recognize your voice when you give it commands. Think of storing files and receiving faxes strictly on your computer system and never having a piece of paper pass through your hands. Consider accessing data through a small, powerful desktop personal computer and pulling up both visual images like photographs, and text that you can manipulate at will. Envision attending a conference with your colleagues in Australia without ever leaving your office.

These are not scenes from a science fiction movie—the technology exists today along the Information Super Highway. The key for most of us is a driving instructor who can teach us how not to get blind-sided merging into traffic.

Many School of Business alumni are helping businesses keep up with traffic on the new highway—the pace can be intimidating. And the first part of the job is making people aware of just how far information technology has come—and can go. →



"I like to use the analogy of the Jetsons," says **Tom Mountcastle '75AS '81BS/B**, an Alumni Star for 1993. He is president of CMS Automation, a systems integration company serving the East Coast. They provide complete turnkey solutions including hardware, software, customized end-user training, installation and follow-up support. "As the years have passed, the technology has closely rivaled the cartoon and it's no



Tom Mountcastle

longer futuristic. The Information Super Highway is on the horizon. The technology is already out there, people just don't know it. As the communications backbone matures, everyone will be able to tie into it."

That's how companies like Mountcastle's are changing the face of business in the United States and abroad. Many businesses know they need to change their processes and systems to remain competitive in today's global marketplace. But how do they do it? What do they want to do with an information system? How will they communicate with clients? Do they want to be able to network with branches in Europe? Do they have to redesign existing systems?

Businesses that need help with these kinds of questions often turn to informa-

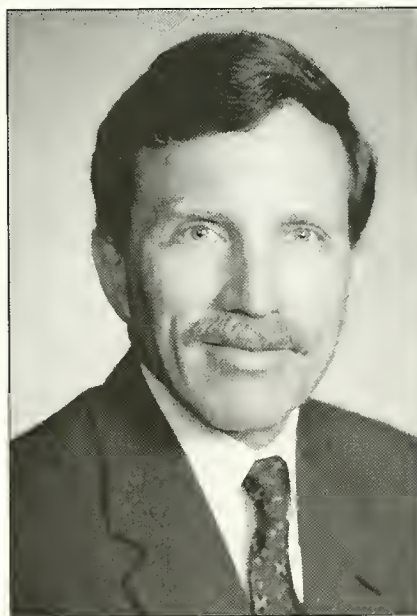
tion technology consultants. These are the experts who can take a business's information or process wish list and make it reality.

"The market today is driven by end-users," says Mountcastle. "Their needs are diverse. You must sit down and talk with them to understand their needs, understand how their business operates."

**James Phlegar Jr '77MBA '81**

**Accounting**, a partner with the information technology consulting firm of Ernst & Young, has a similar philosophy.

"We provide clients with solutions to business problems, solutions that usually include process re-engineering. We use information systems as an enabling technology to improve practices. This is designed to give the client a competitive advantage."

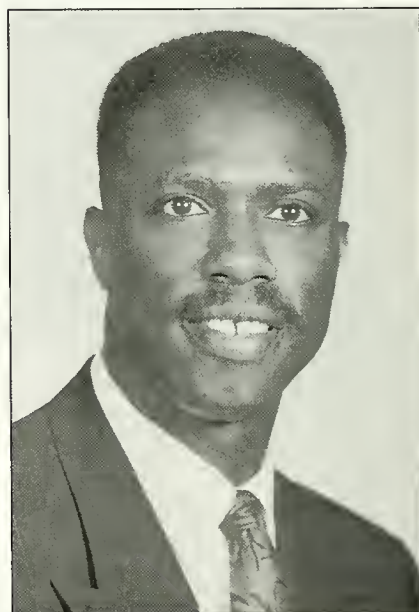


James Phlegar Jr

Phlegar's focus is the marriage of technology and redesign in business systems. "I want to make sure the information technology direction is properly aligned with the business's strategies. Part of the secret of information technology utilization is the continued analysis of a company's business needs and processes. We help them analyze present and future needs, and develop the proper systems, technology infrastructure and processes to reach their goals."

One solution Ernst and Young devised is a sophisticated revenue optimization system. The computer provides salespeople with current information about contracts with suppliers (which change frequently). Sales agents can serve customers more effectively because they know which suppliers can handle which products, in what quantities, and how fast.

Not incidentally, this makes a big dif-



Glenn Davis

ference in company profits. "This is where the value of an information system is," Phlegar says. "When you drive a system into sales or management processes, there's an opportunity for a significant effect on the company."

The goals for each business vary as much as the type of business. Information technology consultants help businesses as large as Fortune 500 companies and as small as two-person operations.

Some businesses rely on people like **Glenn Davis '86BS/B**. He is a computer consultant with Broughton Systems, Inc., a company that provides short-term and long-term consultants to support businesses in Central Virginia. Broughton Systems specializes in management consulting, business needs analysis, application product selection and development of custom software.

Davis works with a business, sometimes for a year or more, providing services ranging from designing systems to implementing their use. Davis is often called in when a business needs someone in-house with specialized skills who can respond rapidly to a change in business conditions.

"Information technology is facing changes every day," says Davis, former president of the Data Processing Management Association. "That's what makes the job interesting. And every company is different. Some want to streamline, others want to increase profits. I let the companies describe the changes they need and then develop a plan geared toward achieving their goals. Other companies know exactly what they want and they need someone with the



*Jim Clements*

skills to produce it for them."

**Jim Clements '80 MS/B** is director of software development with USConnect, a systems integration firm in New York City. He helps businesses analyze their needs and then designs computer networks to best support the information flow.

One of the general trends that he sees many businesses following is moving some of their applications from main-frame computers to networks of smaller,

midrange and personal computers. This is called "right-sizing."

"Client/server computing allows users on a network to use their personal computers to retrieve information that is 'served' to them by more powerful, lower-cost midrange computers," Clements explains. "With midrange computers, processors can be added as processing loads increase. Client processing, such as word processing or graphics



*Dick Nelson*

functions, is all kept in an environment familiar to the user. Clients can use their own personal preferences in equipment, and the tools they're most familiar with—some may use Apple PC's, others may use IBM-compatible PC's."

With these more powerful midsized computers, capabilities go far beyond the convenience of "user-friendly." Businesses will incorporate the new technology in many ways.

"One application is mixing text and image information," says Clements. "Personnel files may soon be more useful because they can store photographs along with name and address. Or the facilities management division at VCU could pull up architectural renderings of a building they're planning to work on."

**Dick Nelson '65 BS/B** is president of NELCO, Ltd. He's worked in various

## ISRI: ACCESS RAMPS

There is service at VCU's School of Business that can help make it easier for Richmond businesses to move along with the flow of the Information Super Highway. The Information Systems Research Institute (ISRI), directed by Dr. A. James Wynne, provides a variety of services to the members of its Corporate Associates Program. There's continuing professional education, consulting and technical assistance, research and technology development.

Members can take advantage of an extensive library of training tapes, periodic seminars and workshops, database design and development, multimedia work stations with video, sound, CD-ROM and touch screen capabilities, and access to communication networks for joint research project development.

The ISRI strives to meet the needs of its members with specialized projects, and at least 23 companies in the Richmond area have joined the Corporate Associates Program to support activities and services.

Many of their activities are also aimed at students. There's student/business employment assistance, doctoral dissertation cooperative projects with corporate members and support for student internship programs.

Alumni credit their education at VCU and the work of Dr. Wynne for helping them reach their own career goals.

"VCU equipped me to be flexible," says Davis. "They teach the curriculum as well as how to react in business situations."

"Working with people on Wall Street is a demanding environment," says Clements. "I work with someone who went to MIT and a Rhodes Scholar. My education from VCU stands up to them all."

*Interested? Does your business need an on-ramp? Contact Jim Wynne at (804) 828-3182. Email: ab06ajw@vcum1.ucc.vcu.edu.*



aspects of computer technology from marketing to consulting. He's also impressed with new business applications that are practical now that the technology has made them possible.

"It's exciting to see companies restructuring how they handle paper," says Nelson. "All forms of paperwork, including data as well as images, can be distributed electronically through computer networks. What was once a manual paper flow process can now be done through desktop computers. It will reduce the use of paper, the storage of paper and all that entails.

"If a person is looking at particular information, it can also be available to other people within the same organization simultaneously. You can't do that with paper files. People can be much more productive."

But even with product enhancement and new chip technology bringing the cost down and putting more powerful machines on the desk top, equipment purchases can be prohibitive for some businesses. That's where Nelson's company comes in. NELCO, Ltd. leases computers and other high technology equipment to businesses.

"Seventy-five percent of computer equipment acquired today by businesses is leased," says Nelson. "Leasing allows businesses to get the technology they

need when they need it and not let ownership restrict their flexibility. Leasing also allows businesses to more efficiently utilize their capital to finance their growth."

Still, the most sophisticated applications and custom software are only tools. These companies that specialize in information technology understand that it takes people to operate the machines. They offer user training for the businesses they help.

"People are usually concerned by changes in systems or processes," says Phlegar. "We believe there should be a confluence of people, process and technology. If you don't prepare the people, change isn't going to work."

"I often talk to a lot of users when I'm developing a system," says Davis. "They're the people who are going to be using the systems and we need to consider the basics of what they want. Some are resistant to change, but usually at the end they will say their job is a lot easier."

There are numerous advantages to cruising on the Information Super Highway. With streamlining, increasing profits, decreasing paper, boosting productivity, and plugging into an emerging global network (among other benefits), it's easy to see why companies are eager to make sure they don't get left in the

parking lot. And this new technology also benefits the individual user who may be able to work at home.

"Since we're moving away from centralized processing," says Mountcastle, "individual users will have so much more power. In a city like Los Angeles, where half your workday is spent getting to the office, information technology could take cars off the road and let people get more work done. We're moving rapidly toward a remote workforce armed with the mobile office. This will change the way business is done."

And Mountcastle also admits he's still waiting for George Jetson's flying car.

LINDA MILLS IS A RICHMOND FREE-LANCER. SHE WROTE THIS ARTICLE ON AN "ANCIENT IBM CLONE" IN WORD PERFECT 5.0. WE TRANSLATED HER DISK FOR OUR MACS IN MICROSOFT WORD 5.1 AND THEN DESIGNED THE FEATURE IN QUARKXPRESS.

ILLUSTRATION BY KERRY TALBOT '88BFA/A.

PHOTOS OF THOMAS MOUNTCASTLE AND DICK NELSON BY JAY PAUL '85BGS/NTS '93MFA/A.

PHOTO OF GLENN DAVIS AND JAMES PHLEGAR BY ACTION PHOTO CO., INC.

## VCU ONLINE

As a busy urban campus and teaching hospital, VCU didn't just grow through the seventies and eighties—it multiplied. So did the mainframes and PCs. Sometimes, "you just couldn't get there from here," even between departments on the same campus.

All that is changing, fast. For the first time, the university will have an total, integrated system through fiber-optic cable. MCV Campus and Hospitals are already wired. By the end of June, cable will link Academic Campus buildings. VCU and MCV Hospitals are investing in the technology for the two campuses, and Bell Atlantic provides the link between campuses for \$1 a year. By June 1995, wiring in 250 dorm rooms will connect students to the backbone network, paid for from student affairs money.

According to VCU's Tim Farnham, the new system "can exchange information nonstop 24 hours a day, seven days a week for students, faculty, administration, health professionals and patients. The cable can carry voice, video and data—including complex images like MRI scans, molecular modeling and multi-media instruction. Hospital departments are sending patient x-rays and MRIs now."

For those who follow tech-speak, the network is compatible with Fiber Distributed Data Interface (FDDI) the international industry

standard for high-speed Local Area Networks (LANs). One or more bundles of 24-48 fibers make up each conduit segment. The FDDI structure of dual, counter-rotating rings builds in a "self-healing" element to preserve the network if any link or pathway fails.

For now, a network "ring" of two fibers is carrying data at 100 megabits (millions of bits) per second. Up to 11 more "rings" could be added as needed. The system is also set up to accommodate added high-speed ATM technology—which handles at the low end up to 155 megabits per second. "At the high end, more than 1.2 gigabits (billions of bits), ten times faster than FDDI," says Farnham. And sending images will require high speeds. "For instance, telephone voices," Farnham points out, take only 32 thousands bits per second; video images take up a whopping 32 millions bits per second. "That can bring a system to its knees." Obviously, upgrade we must, as we go.

The best part is that though upgrades do require more cable, it can be done through what Farnham calls "a reusable hole." No need to dig up the street again; just pull more fiber through the conduit. "This system is planned to last VCU at least 25 years."

—M. E. M.

## SMALL CLUSTERS

# BIG IMPACT

BY MARY ELLEN MERCER AND JILL BAUGHAN

Physicists are finding that they can do great things with small clusters. These groups of 2 to 2000 atoms have astonishing properties with implications for materials science, nuclear physics, chemistry, atoms and crystals. VCU physicist Dr. Puru Jena seems to take inspiration from his field. From a department with neither a PhD program (as yet) nor related experimental projects, Jena and a "small cluster" of colleagues continue to generate theoretical work with international multidisciplinary impact.

Since 1985, Jena has brought \$2 million in grants to VCU and directed five international conferences on microclusters, finite systems and hydrogen in metals. He has published more than 160 papers and four books—usually working with colleagues and students, at VCU and around the world. His colleagues at VCU named Jena the university's Distinguished Scholar for 1987, and he was presented with VCU's highest faculty honor, the Award of Excellence, in 1992.

Fellow scientists from Johns Hopkins University to Tohoku University in Japan rely on his theoretical predictions to suggest directions for their own experimental work. Many of his and the department's publications are in rapid communications journals; he and departmental colleagues Drs. Rao and Khanna are at the forefront of a rapidly evolving field. Carter White of the Naval Research laboratory points to their "pioneering studies on the electronic structure, topology, fragmentation and

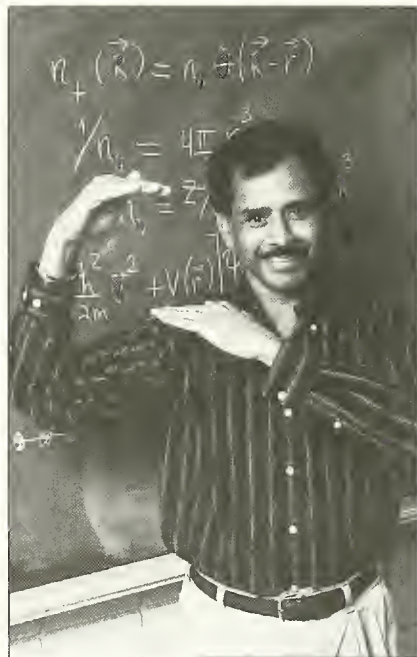
seeking new ways to explain old things, searching for the answers to puzzling questions, and wondering about things no one has thought before."

Again, he is inspired by these tiny machines, microclusters. Move some clusters from two dimensions to three, and they suddenly become magnetic. Or add an element. One carbon atom added at

the core of a volatile 12-atom aluminum cluster makes it stable—and able to interlock with other clusters to form new materials. When Jena applied cluster methods to describe the quantum-mechanical states of hydrogen atoms, he opened a new field. Try new combinations—of disciplines or searching minds—and those leaps happen.

The biennial "Richmond conference" in finite systems research, sponsored by VCU, is a good example of Jena's organizing skill and deep understanding across several fields. It immediately became an international must, a dynamic workshop that brought researchers together to trade and test concepts and information.

Jena likes putting people and resources together to watch the interaction. "No university on earth," he says, "has all the experts needed to go from ground zero to seventh heaven." Not alone. So he helped develop the Research Center for the Study of Finite Systems which brings together experts from 34 institutions in physics, chemistry, material science and engineering. And, naturally, his colleagues appointed him



magnetic properties of clusters." People want to know, now, what the VCU group is doing.

How does it happen, this "ability to make important intellectual leaps," as Samuel Myers of Sandia National Laboratories puts it? Jena says he wants to share with his students "the joy of



their first director. Now, the groups at VCU, Johns Hopkins and Penn State are working on a proposal to the National Science Foundation to set up a center to experiment with bulk production of clusters.

Jena's personal magnetic properties attract fellow scientists and students alike. Professor Bing-lin Gu, director of physics at Tsinghua University at Beijing, calls Jena "a one-man multinational corporation." And United Nations, one could add, considering his compassionate support of young scholars in Richmond and around the world.

In the classroom, Jena says, "I like the sparks in students' eyes when they understand something. And he learns a lot himself. "If you just study a book, you can fool yourself, thinking you understood it. But when you stand up in a class to explain things to people who will challenge your every word, then you really learn the material. I find research and teaching quite complementary."

The sparks continue to fly. Currently, Jena is chairman of the Gordon Research Conference, a series held every summer in New England; he is on the review board of the Swedish Consortium on Cluster Science; and he was recently appointed scientific editor for the Oxford University Press.

He's a busy man, and it looks as though he'll stay that way, since he is also looking forward to the next Richmond conference to be held in 1995. But Jena thrives on this kind of excitement, and the opportunities he has to share it. "I have been quite lucky, coming into the field in the mid-1980's just as it was about to take off. Much of what we had theorized since 1985 is now being proved experimentally. Our predictions are being verified one after another.

"It's a lot of fun, actually," he says. "If it was work, I probably wouldn't do it," he laughs. "Work for the sake of work is boring."

JILL BAUGHAN IS A RICHMOND FREE-LANCE WRITER AND VCU ADJUNCT INSTRUCTOR IN ENGLISH. MARY ELLEN MERCER IS EDITOR OF SHAFER COURT CONNECTIONS.

PHOTO BY KEVIN SCHINDLER '89BFA/A.

## JENA'S STUDENTS: SPARKING INTEREST

In 1984, **Feng Liu '90 PhD/H&S** listened to Puru Jena lecture on small clusters at Tsinghua University in Beijing. Liu was so impressed by what he heard, he applied to VCU, hoping to earn his PhD under Jena's direction.

He wasn't disappointed. By then, Jena had helped establish VCU's PhD in chemical physics with the chemistry department.

"Dr. Jena," he says, "was one of the best advisors and teachers I have ever had. The high standard he sets for his students has definitely brought me to a new level." Even as a student, Liu coauthored 13 publications, won the Physics Academic Excellence Graduate Award, and earned his degree.

Now Liu is a research associate at Oak Ridge National Laboratory, using the parallel supercomputer (the largest in the world) to explore the structure and electronics properties of solid state materials. Part of his research is the study of impurities in semi-conductors (materials which don't conduct current easily) to see how the function of semi-conducting devices can be improved by controlling those impurities. Ultimately, his work will result in more efficient microcircuits in everything from cordless phones to jumbo jets.

Challenging, yes, but Liu is up to it. For this he thanks the man who taught him not only the knowledge of physics, but also the ways of a good physicist. "For all my achievements, I am deeply in debt to Professor Jena for his kind interest, encouragement and assistance. Just like an old Chinese Proverb says, 'The better the master, the better the pupil.'"

**David Hagan '85BS/ H&S** wants to convince you that studying science isn't just for weird geeks with plastic pocket protectors.

Hagan was a lawyer moving toward patent law when he took a physics class with Jena. The experience was so fascinating, he stayed in the field. He started working at the Science Museum of Virginia as a staff scientist, developing large interactive galleries in physics and aerospace. Now his job is to

bring to the museum programs that are fun and funny, programs that will appeal to every age and interest level, from preschooler to engineer. Whether visitors wander through a land of giant robotic dinosaurs, view a solar eclipse or listen to an expert talk about science frauds and astrology, Hagan wants to make sure that, while they learn, they're having a great time.

He also makes sure that the museum's influence transcends its walls by offering programs for area schools, and collaborating with VCU on projects that promote excellence in teaching science.

Jena, Hagan remembers vividly, "expected a certain dedication, and a high level of respect for the process of teaching. His own dedication and personal warmth—and his great sense of humor—were a real inspiration to me. Now I'm working to bring science as a way of learning and knowing to everybody we can possibly touch. It's been tremendously fulfilling to me, and it was Puru Jena who started it all."

Jena's classroom rapport includes everyone.

**Dr. Karin Kuroski '91BS/H&S** should know.

She was a chemistry major taking her physics requirement when she met Jena. She learned quickly that "his door was always open, whether you wanted to talk about school or anything else." He was also "the best teacher I ever had," she says. "Interesting, knowledgeable, meticulous and organized."

Now a busy resident in family practice, Kurowski is also the mother of one child (and one on the way), wife of one husband. Juggling the personal and professional while she was in school was a tough job too, but one made easier because of her regard for Jena. "He was always available and concerned."

He still is. "In fact, when I had major surgery one summer in Sweden, Dr. Jena was in a conference in Finland and made it a point to come over to see me. I count him as one of my best friends," she says. "He's in our night prayers every evening."

JILL BAUGHAN

# THE I UNIVERSITY

**THEN**  
1991–Fall 1993

**NOW**  
Summer 1994

## VCU'S STRATEGIC PLAN

BY PENNY JEZ AND MARY ELLEN MERCER

# THE I UNIVERSITY TRANSFORMATIVE ACTIVITY

• School of Engineering feasibility study; regional need identified.

• Nine interdisciplinary centers will be established to foster research, teaching and service across schools, departments and both campuses. To focus VCU strengths in Public Policy, Environmental Studies, Drug and Alcohol studies, AIDS/HIV Studies, Neuroscience, Cardiovascular Studies, Oncology, Transplantation, Primary Care.

• Information technology—problem of haphazard links, weak overall planning.

• Keep VCU's research capacity growing.

• Plan approved September 1993; accountability built in through twice-yearly reports to the Provost and Council of Advisors. Fully implemented by September 1999.

• \$10.5 million endowment funds raised; Dr. Henry McGee appointed associate provost; "mini-engineering school" held in May.

• Center for AIDS/HIV Studies set up December 1993, Dr. Lisa Kaplowitz, director. Center for Public Policy established July 1994, Dr. Robert Holsworth director.

• Fiber optic cable connects all buildings on both campuses and MCV Hospitals; libraries acquire important databases; vice provost for information technology hired July 1.

• VCU named one of 88 "Research Universities-I" in Carnegie Report, which puts us at the top level for funding. Virginia Biotechnology Research Park groundbreaking May 17, 1994.

• By July 1, several major changes in place.

It's a VCU tradition to interface with the city. The symbol of this university is not the cool, aloof ivory tower, but the rambunctious energy of Shafer Court. On both campuses, student and faculty use the urban setting as a teaching and research lab. In the process, we respond to community and business needs—in partnership programs and in the way we design students' education.

These street smarts have come in handy over the past two and a half years. Like corporations and universities around the country, VCU has responded to a tighter economy, new technologies and changing societal needs by refocusing its strengths through a strategic plan.

Major directions include sharpening undergraduate education; increasing public support through community service; using information technology effectively in teaching and research; and restructuring programs to focus resources on our strongest programs and to develop new initiatives that will put our graduates where community needs are—and where the jobs will be.

Sounds great, but is it really going to happen? We thought of that. In fact, VCU leads its peers with a unique accountability plan that monitors actual change and reshapes plans that aren't feasible with oversight from a university Council of Advisors (which includes faculty, staff and students) and implementation from the Provost's office and Academic Planning. Very few universities build this into their strategic plans. State education officials already praise VCU's efforts as among the most progressive in Virginia, according to the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* (May 21, 1994). There's nothing "virtual" about our realities.

So, what are these changes? What does this mean for VCU and my school? Glad you asked. To the left is an overview of what's happened since the ongoing process began in 1991 and was approved in September 1993.

All right. But what will be happening in my school? We'd like to staple in a CD to illustrate this one on video. Like any live organism, VCU is adapting to a changing environment by adding here, absorbing there, shedding here—becoming more functional.

### Restructuring Schools and Divisions

#### Arts

- Expand Dance and Choreography, Communication Arts and Design, PhD in Art History.
- Increase resources for Painting and Printmaking.

#### Business

- Fast-track MBA program accepts its first class in August 1994.
- Specific plan to restructure and strengthen programs is now in the approval process; details in later issues of Shafer Court.

#### Community and Public Affairs

July 1, 1994, the school is absorbed into the university.

- Urban Studies and Planning becomes a department in the college of Humanities and Sciences. (continued on page 32)



# REUNION

## '94



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# REUNION WEEKEND:

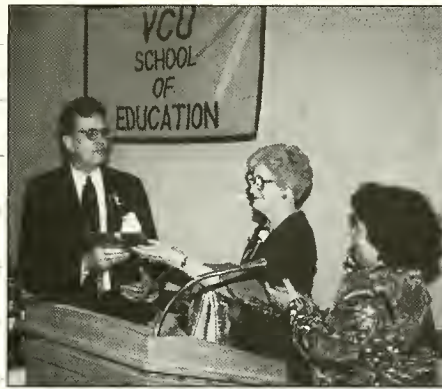
**1: Rodney Pulliam '90 C&PA** (right) catches up with a friend at the African American Alumni Council Networking Reception and Art Show and Sale. ~

**2: Bob Lindholm '50 RPI** catches up with **Laverne Deusebio '51 RPI** at the RPI Dinner. ~ **3: Angela Vaughan '82 Business** pondering which artwork would look best on her living room wall. Artist vendors, **Jonathan and Dana Davis '88 BS Communications** of Art Awareness. ~ **4: VCU Alumni Association President, Peggy Adams '77 NTS** greets **Donna**

**Knicely '77 Education**, her husband, **John W. Jordan III '49 RPI** and **Kathleen Mansfield Bullard '41 RPI**. ~ **5: Kathleen Bullard '41 RPI** shares memories from the alumni association's early days with **Peggy Adams** and her other Breakfast Club members. ~ **6: Jo Harvey Snead '43 RPI**, **Virginia Delp Ogg '43 RPI**, and **Betty Berry '42 RPI** at the RPI dinner. ~ **7: Ann Nash Love '41 RPI** and **Jo Harvey Snead '43 RPI** were all smiles all weekend long as they shared their 1941 RPI Wigwam yearbook with friends at the RPI Dinner. ~ **8: Class of '44's** Class agent, **Anne Rosenberg Fischer '44**. ~ **9: Peggy Adams** inducted this year's 50 Year Alumni Club members who were welcomed by current members. From left to right: **Ken Rowe '43 RPI**, **Catherine Murphy Welton '42 RPI**, **Kathleen Bullard '41 RPI**, **Ann Nash Love '41 RPI**, **Martha Riis Moore '37 RPI**, **Peggy Adams**, **VCUAA President**, **Louise Peck Dill '39 RPI**, **Mary Laurie Smith Cooke '37 RPI**, **Anne Rosenberg Fischer '44**, **Lucille Anderson Baber '39 RPI**.

~ **10: Dee Dee Batten '81, '84 C&PA** and **Rita Mason-Lucas '82 Mass Communications** greet one another at the Reunion Weekend Dance. (PHOTO BY CHESTER WOOD) ~ **11: Jo Harvey Snead '43 RPI**, **Ann Nash Love '41 RPI**, **Sands Smith '49 RPI**, **Ken Van Allen '50 RPI**, and **Virginia Delp Ogg '43 RPI** search through an RPI Wigwam for their class pictures. ~

**12: Distinguished Alumna Peggy Meara '72, '74 Education**, Superintendent of Powhatan Public Schools. ~ **13: Bill Coon '68 Education** receives an award for Outstanding Service to the School of Education's Alumni Board from **Jenn von Schilling '76, '88 Education**, President of the School of Education Alumni Board and **Sharon Bryant '83 Education**, Immediate Past President of that same board. ~ **14: Emeriti faculty members Dr. Robert and Gladys Fleming** at the School of Education 30th anniversary celebration. ~ **15: Dean John Oehler** awarding a Distinguished Alumni award to **Germaine Fauntleroy '91 Education**, Superintendent of Petersburg Public Schools. ~ **16: Dean John Oehler** awarding a Distinguished Alumni award to **Dr. Henry Rhone '73 Education**, VCU's Interim Vice Provost for Student Affairs. ~ **17: Dean John Oehler** awarding a Distinguished Alumni award to **Carter White '74, '80 Education**, Acting Deputy Superintendent Correctional Education for the Commonwealth of Va.



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PHOTOGRAPHY (EXCEPT WHERE NOTED) BY MICHAEL SIMON.



# ALUMNET

\*Member of VCU Alumni Association

## 1960s

**Jerry L. Copley '69BS**  
'78Med/E is assistant principal at Lancaster High School in Kilmarnock. He was formerly an educational utility specialist with Hampton public schools, where he provided instruction for children with long-term illnesses.

**Grace Harris '60MSW/SW**, VCU's provost and vice president for academic affairs, was elected to the board of directors of Richfood Holdings Inc., a local food distributor. She is the first African-American woman to hold the position. Also elected was Roger Gregory, a former rector at VCU.

**Roger Neathawk '61BS/P**  
'78MS/B was elected to a three-year term on the Easter Seal Society of Virginia's board of directors. Roger received the Peter N. Pastore Award in 1992 for outstanding contributions to individuals with disabilities by the Society. He is currently the CEO of Marketing Strategies Inc. in Richmond, where he lives.

**\*Roger Nicholson '68BS/H&S** has been named director of professional development and doctor of ministry studies at Union Theological Seminary in Richmond. Roger is a past president of the VCU Alumni Association. He received his Master of Divinity degree from Union Theological Seminary and his Doctor of Ministry degree from McCormick Theological Seminary.

## 1970s

**Angelique Acevedo**  
'75BFA/A was one of six educators in Colorado chosen by their Department of Education to receive the Milken Family Foundation National Educator Award, a prize worth \$25,000. The award ceremony took place at an education conference April 7-9 in Los Angeles. Candidates are chosen by an independent selection committee which does not accept applications or nominations for the prestigious award. Angelique teaches drawing and photography at Bear Creek Senior High School in Lakewood.

**Wanda Peery Alston**  
'74BS/SW is an employment training supervisor for the city of Alexandria. She lives in Washington, DC.

**J. Michael Andrews**  
'78BS/MC, a Navy Lt. Commander, recently received the Defense Meritorious Service Medal as official recognition of his accomplishments, exceptional professional ability and performance of duty while serving at the Public Affairs Department. Michael was responsible for a

project in public affairs in a joint warfare environment and completely restructured a major command post's exercise for officer students. He is currently assigned to the Navy Office of Information in Washington, DC.

**Janice Brandt '73BS**  
'80Med/E was a featured speaker at Clemson University's recent conference on Professional Development for Women, held at the Richmond Marriott. Janice is the President/Principal at Brandt Management Group, Inc in Richmond.

**\*John Buhl Jr '78BS/B** was recently promoted to security manager at Virginia Power. John lives in Richmond.

**Nancy Cross '77Med/E** works at Virginia Power, where she was named project manager, nuclear services. She lives in Mechanicsville.

**Nancy Davis '71BFA/A** joined Bonner & Waple Realty, Inc. as a real estate sales person. Nancy has a Master's degree in education from Virginia State University and a Doctorate from William and Mary. She is a teacher on the support services staff at Lancaster County Primary School. She and her husband Jim and their three children live in White Stone.

**Willie Jones Dell '70MSW/SW** is planning to retire in June after 17 years as Executive Director at the Richmond Community Senior Center Inc. She was recently featured in a *Richmond Times-Dispatch* article which highlighted her many contributions to the retirees at the center as well as other "needy and forgotten" people in the city.

**Paul Fleisher '75Med/E** wrote the text for *The Master Violinmaker*, a book

## HOT DOG!

**Ken Magill '65BS/B '69MS/E**, Treasurer of the VCUAA; **Marsha Shuler '74BS '79MA/B**, President-Elect; and **Corky Evans** prepare hot dog's at Now We're Cookin'. The cookout was hosted by the VCU Alumni Association on April 9th for approximately 1200 prospective students, parents and friends. Now We're Cookin' was part of the UES/Admissions sponsored Block Party for accepted students. Members of the



alumni association enjoyed cooking and serving hot dog's, chicken nuggets and softdrinks.

The cookout provided opportunities for members of the Alumni Association to mix with prospective students, share their pride in VCU and encourage them to attend. Students and families were impressed with VCU's welcome and commented that other potential colleges were not so kind. **Peggy Adams '87BGS/NTS**, President of the Alumni Association greeted guests, offering encouragement and strong alumni support for VCU.



# Now We're Cookin'

for children published in 1993 by Houghton Mifflin and illustrated with color photography by David Saunders '77BS/E.

**Kenneth Gusler Jr '73BS/E** recently wed Ann Berry in Salem, VA. Kenneth is employed by Cornett Realty in Roanoke, where the Guslers live.

**Maria Hall '73BS/SW** was inducted into the UNC-Charlotte Alumni Association's Hall of Fame last October. Maria is currently an addiction therapist at the Veteran's Administration Center in Salisbury, NC and a counselor at Rowan-Cabarrus Community College. She has also received the Hands and Heart Award presented annually by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. Maria's other civic involvements include board member of Rowan Helping Ministries, a shelter for the homeless where she is developing a substance abuse program, and board member of Crisis Assistance Ministry.

**Dr. Gloria J. Holland '76MBA/B** is involved with the healthcare reform movement in the Department of Veterans Affairs. She lives in Woodbridge, VA.

**Emily Hopkins '77BA/H&S** has been promoted to Navy Commander while serving with Navy Broadcasting Service Detachment in San Diego. Emily joined the Navy in 1977.

**Janet Hutchinson '75BFA/A** has moved to West Virginia, after living in the Virgin Islands for 15 years. She was one of 143 artists accepted into the 1993-94 West Virginia Juried Exhibition at the Cultural Museum in Charleston.

**Hiram Johnson '70BS/B** was named manager, nuclear materials at Virginia Power. He lives in Richmond.

**Gerard Lequin '77BS/B** was named the corporate director, Accounting and Budgets at Universal Leaf Tobacco Company, Inc. in Richmond. Gerard lives in Midlothian.

**David Saunders '77BS/E** did the photo illustrations for *The Master Violinmaker*, a book for children published in 1993 by

Houghton Mifflin and written by **Paul Fleisher '75MED/E**.

**Sergei Troubetzkoy '78BFA/A** is the director of the Augusta-Staunton-Waynesboro Visitors Bureau. Before coming to the Staunton area, Sergei worked for the Petersburg Department of Tourism for nearly five years. He completed studies and became a Certified Tour Professional in 1989 and received the Public Sector Award from the Virginia Travel Council in 1991.

**William West '70BS/H&S** was named manager, support services at Virginia Power. William lives in Ashland.

**Woodrow Woodward Jr '79BS/B '82MPA/C&PA** has been named Resident Engineer for the Saluda Residency where he will oversee all maintenance and construction activities in the four-county residency.

## 1980s

**Scott Appelrouth '86BS/H&S** and **Amie Thornton** were married last June in Richmond. Scott is pursuing his doctorate in sociology at New York University where he is an instructor.

**Lori Blackmon '84BA/H&S** emailed an update. She is at George Mason University, "happy to be in school full time" working on a master's in public policy. She's also applying to PhD programs, and "VCU is on the list!"

**Laura Bland '86/MC** and **Robert McFadden** were married December 19 in Halifax County. Laura and Robert are employed at the Danville Register & Bee.

**James W. Ford Brown '85BS/MC** and **Laverne Garrett** were married October 9 at Smith Mountain Lake. The Browns live in Lynchburg.

**Lee Burgin '87MSW/SW** recently addressed the annual training symposium of the Association for Family Therapy at York University in England. Lee and colleague **Marcus G. Jones '85MSW/SW** presented a program about abusive spousal relationships. Lee and Marcus are Co-Directors of the Roanoke Valley Family Therapy Practice.

**Martha Randolph Carr '83BS/H&S** opened a publishing house in Richmond called



**Gale Crowder '86BGS/NTS** (left), and **Joan Rexinger '86BGS/NTS** (right) share the spotlight with **Corky Evans**.

Nimrod House. She is also the author of the psychological thriller *Wired*. Winner of a 1990 Virginia Press Association award, she is presently working on another novel.

**Tammie Corbett '86BS/B** and **James Hardy** were married last November in Newport News. Tammie is a senior merchandise manager for JC Penney Company. The Hardys live in Austin, TX.



**School of Education Development Officer Shirley Park '84MED/E** (left) takes a moment to meet **Lorene '86/N** and **William '88MURP/C&PA Davidson's** newest addition to their family.

## IN THE PARK AT STONEY POINT

Over 200 alumni, guests and friends gathered at the MCV Physicians In the Park at Stony Point on Monday, May 9th for the Second Annual Neighborhood Alumni Reception. Approximately 5045 alumni in the zip code areas of 23225, 23113, and 23235 were

invited to the cocktail reception which was hosted by **Judy Collins '75/N** and featured a state of the university address from President Eugene Trani. Also attending the event were a dozen accepted high school honor students from that neighborhood who

are considering attending VCU. The Board of Trustees for the MCV Foundation held their regular meeting at the new facility on the same day and stayed for the reception.

The concept behind Neighborhood Alumni Receptions, which began last spring at the Dominion Club in Wyndham, is to give alumni who live near one another a

chance to know each other. The events are held in areas with heavy concentrations of alumni. Look for future events in Mechanicsville and Chesterfield County.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
ANDY JONES.



## LITERARY MAGIC

Sheri Reynolds '92MFA/H&amp;S

BY SUSAN AHERN

"I write in my dreams. My dreams are real intense," says novelist Sheri Reynolds. "That's where I get my best ideas."

She also gets ideas by walking around her Fan neighborhood, talking to herself and looking, as she ardently puts it, "kind of crazy." But when she opens herself to stimulation from the outside world, Reynolds explains, "things click," and the magical part—which is what she cares most about in writing—happens.

"I pull out my journal and sketch out this scene. All the words are there in the right order, and I feel more like a messenger than a creator. That's the best! Almost like it comes from somewhere else. Like I'm speaking for a spirit, and the message I've been given is the most important thing that spirit, if you want to call it that, has to say."

Clearly, Reynolds writes out of her imagination and subconscious. Still, she feels free to allow social and political issues to enter her writing. With the proliferation of self-help groups over the last decade, Reynolds wanted to create a strong woman character who found answers to a troubling past, not in a group or a therapist's office, but within herself.

So in her first novel, *Bitterroot Landing*, due out next January from Putnam, Reynolds tells the story of a woman who runs away from an abusive background and takes a job as a church custodian. There, the young woman creates an earth goddess out of leaves, sticks, ashes and wax. She also begins talking to the statues, especially the Virgin Mary. The voices of the statues talking back serve as a guide and help her heal herself.

"I see a lot of women—friends and family members"—said Reynolds, "who don't trust in themselves enough to know that they have the answers to the questions. And rather than finding answers within themselves, they rely on other people. And that weakens women."

Reynolds credits VCU's MFA program in Creative Writing with giving her the structure and discipline important to a young writer. Enrolling in the program bought her time to write; and Tom DeHaven's novel-writing workshop provided useful critiques and deadlines—which resulted in *Bitterroot Landing*. (Faculty poet Greg Donovan would be delighted. "Our job," he says, "is to help our students build a foundation for a life as a writer.")

Atypical of first novels, paperback rights to *Bitterroot Landing* have been sold, and Reynolds' book has been picked up as an alternate selection-of-the-month for the Literary Guild book club. Reynolds also has a contract with Putnam for two more books in progress.

"I can't believe it's real," she says. "I just hope I'm disciplined enough to do what I have to do." With a beginning like this, it seems that both the foundation and the magic will hold.

SUSAN AHERN IS A RICHMOND FREELANCE WRITER.



HUNTER SESSIONS

ried in October in Duck, NC. The couple lives in Outerbanks, NC.

**Marcus G. Jones**

'85MSW/SW recently addressed the annual training symposium of the Association for Family Therapy at York University in England, along with colleague **Lee Burgin '87MSW/SW**, on the topic of spousal abuse. Marcus and Lee are Co-Directors of the Roanoke Valley Family Therapy Practice.

**Sabra Jones '82MS/C&PA** is the new clerk for the Arlington County Board. Sabra lives in Lorton, VA.

**Susan J. Jones '86BS/B** is the assistant vice president and office manager of Jefferson National's Germanna office. She is also a graduate of the Virginia Bankers School of Management.

**Larry Kidd '82MBA/B** was named corporate director for administrative liaison at Universal Leaf Tobacco Company, Inc. in Richmond. Larry lives in Midlothian.

**Landon Kines '89BFA/A** and Jerry Thompson were married September 18 in Amissville, VA. Landon is a furniture maker and has a shop in Calverton. The couple lives in Amissville.

**David McDonald '88BS/C&PA** and Kimberly Ashley were married October 9 in Martinsville. David is a store manager for Revco Drug Stores. The couple lives in Martinsville.

**Gary Mitchell '83BS/E '86MURP/C&PA** has taken a new position as Warren County's director of planning. Previously, he held the same position in Farmington, NY.

**Daniel Moody '81BS/C&PA** has joined the law firm of Bacon, Bacon, Johnson, Goddard & Moody in St. Petersburg, FL. He has had numerous articles on construction law published in state and national publications this year. Dan and his wife Tracy welcomed their first child, Matthew Jordan, on August 30.

**Kristen Neilson '89BS/MC** and Kevin Cimock were married November 27 in Hampton. Before the couple moved to Williamsport, PA, Kristen was

**William Coronado '84MBA/B** was named the vice president and controller at Universal Leaf Tobacco Company, Inc. in Richmond. William lives in Chesterfield.

**Edward Cunningham '86MS/MC** has been promoted to director of corporate communications and investor relations for Tredegar Industries in Richmond, where he lives.

**Melike Dagli '87BS/B** married Francis Monahan Jr last September. The Monahans live in Richmond.

**Darin Dailey '86BFA/A** and Suzanne Chastang were married last June in Calavaras Big Tree State Park. Darin is employed by Columbia City Hotel in Calavaras County, CA.

**Patricia Finney '87BS/B** and William Bunns were married in

September in Ford, VA. Patricia works at Stephen W. Bricker and Associates law firm in Richmond, where the couple lives.

**Sheryl Hall '87BS/B** and David Holcomb were married October 16 in Richmond. Sheryl is a marketing representative for Snyder Hunt at Wyndham. The couple lives in Richmond.

**Bridget Hurley '88BFA/A** and Dr. James Wilkinson were mar-

employed by Ferguson Enterprises, Inc.

**Mike Oberschmidt Jr '88MS/B** was named vice president for human resources at Universal Leaf Tobacco Company, Inc. in Richmond. Mike lives in Midlothian.

**Kim O'Brien '88BS/C&PA** married John Foley on September 11 in Harwichport, MA. Both Kim and John work for Fidelity Investments in Boston.

**Marion Patterson '81BS/B** was named director, Leaf Accounting at Universal Leaf Tobacco Company, Inc. in Richmond. Marion lives in Chester.

**Troy Perry '86BS/B '91MBA/B** and Nancy Barnard were married October 23 in the Olde Towne section of Portsmouth. Troy is a financial planner with IDS Financial Services in Portsmouth, where the Perrys live.

**Peggy Pillis '81BS/MC** and William McLenagan were married October 2 in Williamsburg. Peggy works at The Martin Agency, in Richmond, where the couple lives.

**\*Robert Pratt '80BA/H&S** has received national recognition for his book, *The Color of Their Skin: Education and Race in Richmond, Virginia, 1954-89*, published in 1992. Pratt was given the Gustavus Myers Award for 1993 by the Gustavus Myers Center for Human Rights in Fayetteville, AR. The book was an extension of a seminar paper Pratt wrote as a graduate student at UVA. He is currently an assistant professor of

history at the University of Georgia in Athens.

**Stephen Pruitt '89BS/B** and Patricia O'Connor were married at St. Peter's Catholic Church in Richmond October 16. Stephen is employed by Ernst & Young in Richmond, where the couple lives.

**Robin Pugh '89MSW/SW** and Wayne Yoder were married December 4 in Petersburg. Robin works at Johnston-Willis Hospital. The couple lives in Henrico.



**Dana Ratliffe '86BS/C&PA** and Phillip Walker Jr were married last September in Danville. Dana works at the Department of Corrections. The Walkers live in Richmond.

**Janice Reavis '81MPA/C&PA** is the assistant to the president for human resources at Virginia State University. Before assuming the VSU position, Janice was the human resource director for the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services. Janice lives in Richmond.

**Richard Saunders '86BS/B** has been elected President of the Richmond Chapter of the Association of Legal Administrators for 1993-94. He is also the chief operating officer of the Richmond law firm of Sands, Anderson, Marks and Miller.



**\*Louise Seals '83MS/MC** was promoted to managing editor of the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* in January. Louise joined the newspaper in 1968 and became an assistant manager in 1982. She lives in Richmond.

**Vernese Spencer '87MSW/SW** and Michael Leger were married last September in Lynchburg. Vernese is a social worker at Catawba Hospital. The couple lives in Wirtz, VA.

**Lorena Suter '89MSW/SW** and her husband Darryl have

relocated to Orlando, FL. Lorena is a social worker in the Preschool Diagnostic and Intervention Services Department of the Orange County School system. The couple had their first child in June.

**Margaret Teller '88BFA/A** was promoted to Senior Art Director by Marketing Strategies Inc. in Richmond, where she lives.

**Bruce Thomas '88BS/B** recently graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Bank Administration Institute School, the largest banking school in the country. Bruce is an administrative officer and assistant corporate secretary at the Bank of Essex. He, his wife and their two children live in Kilmarnock.

**Christina Tucci '89BS/B** and James Brooks were married in September in Menlo Park, CA. Christina is a branch manager with Citibank in Chicago, where the Brooks' now live.

**Deborah Twells '86BS/H&S** married Joseph Thompson III October 23 in Washington, DC. Deborah is employed by Allstate Financial Corporation in Shirlington and the couple lives in Arlington.

## PROSPECTIVE STUDENT/ALUMNI RECEPTION-HAMPTON/FAIRFAX

Alumni in Hampton Roads and Northern Virginia hosted receptions for prospective students in Newport News on April 12th and in Fairfax County on April 14th. A total of 125 prospective students and their parents came



PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDY JONES

to learn more about VCU from alumni and to talk with admissions officers, current students and faculty members. The program was an opportunity for alumni to "sell" the university, encouraging students in their home communities to attend.

## CHRISTMAS IN APRIL

Azaleas, not poinsettias, bloomed. And the presents were lumber, paint and dry wall. Volunteers at the annual Richmond community project repaired and brightened 40 homes in Church Hill this spring. Green thumbs up, the VCU Alumni Association's Board of Directors planted a large azalea in each yard.



COURTESY OF MARILYN CAMPBELL '81BS/MC

**Marilyn Campbell '81BS/MC** adds mulch to an azalea.

## Alumni Writers, Wordsmiths: We'll Pay for Prose

*Schafer Court Connections* needs alumni with the write stuff to do long and short features, profiles, interviews. We can use contacts all over the country, so send us your samples. Know an unusual alumnus? Got an angle? We can use your ideas, too. Contact Mary Ellen Mercer, editor, at P.O. Box 843044, Richmond VA 23284-3044; email [mercer@cabell.vcu.edu](mailto:mercer@cabell.vcu.edu); (804) 828-7029.



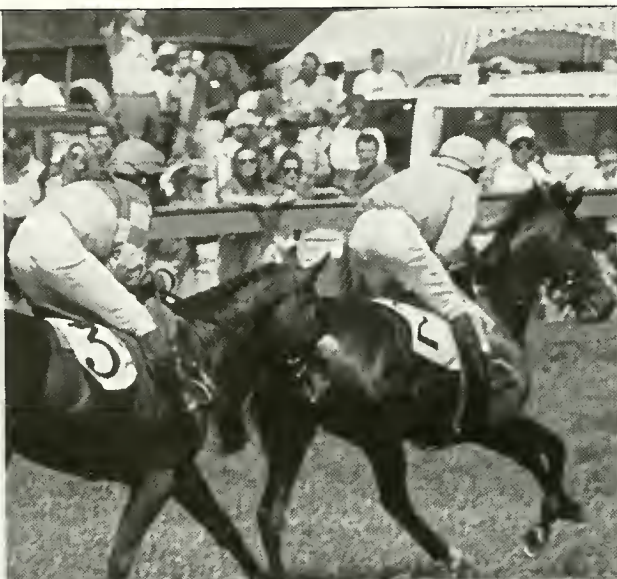
## A DAY AT THE RACES

VCU alumni participated in a tent party on University Row at Richmond's annual Strawberry Hill races on April 16th.

Approximately 140 alumni and guests were in attendance.

This year's warm, sunny weather made for an enjoyable day of horse racing, beverages and barbecue.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
ANDY JONES.



**Karen Turner Ward '83MFA/A** played Billie Holiday in the Theatre Virginia production of "Lady Day at Emerson's Bar & Grill." Karen chairs the Theater Department at Hampton University.

**Bruce Wood '86MBA/B** was elected vice president-financial and rate analyst at Lawyers Title Insurance Corporation in Richmond.

## 1990s

**Caroline Cooper '93BS/C&PA** married William Davis November 6 in Roanoke. The Davises live in Colorado.

**Mark Dunford '90BS/B** and Tina Curtis were married in September in Hampton, where they live. Mark is a manager at Roadway Package Systems in Norfolk.

**Jorene Gewet '93BS/H&S** married Lt. Robert Daniel in August in Virginia Beach. The couple lives in Fredericksburg.

**Gina Gibson '92BS/H&S** and **Kenneth Davis '91BS/H&S** were married last summer in Norfolk. The couple lives in Richmond, where they are both in medical school at MCV.

**Lisa Gori '93BFA/A** and **Kevin Powers '92/M** were married last summer in Chesterfield. Lisa works for Richmond City Schools and Kevin is a resident at Chippenham Hospital in Richmond, where the couple lives.

**Diane Gulden '91BSW/SW** married Richard Gallegos Jr October 2 in Williamsburg. Diane works for Hanover County. The couple lives in Richmond.

**Robert Hancock '92BFA/A** married Donna Stanley October 2

in Mechanicsville. Robert is the assistant curator at the Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond, where the Hancocks live.

**Margaret Handley '93BFA/A** was recently awarded the Jerry L. Hines Memorial Scholarship of \$1,000 from the Virginia State Police Association. She is in her first year of graduate school.

**Jack Hull '91MFA/A** recently received the Outstanding Teacher Award for the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Mississippi, where he is an Assistant Professor in interior design.

**Michelle Fredette '92BS/B** and Gregory Trainum married November 6 in King George, where they live. Michelle is an insurance underwriter for GEICO in Stafford.

**Sydelle Freelon '94BS/C&PA** and Garnell Watts married November 27 in Richmond. The Watts' live in Chesterfield County.

**Tamara Freeman '92BFA/A** and Michael W. Jones married October 16 in Seaford, VA. Tamara is a sales manager for Hecht's Department Stores. The couple lives in Glen Allen.

**Deborah Hassen '93BS/H&S** married Michael McNeely '92BS/B September 11 in Colonial Heights. Deborah is employed with Chester Realty Company and Michael works for Southside Regional Medical Center.



**William Jaeger '92BS/B** and Donna Olinger were married September 11 in Colonial Heights. William is employed by the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond, where the couple lives.

**Jennifer Johnson '93BS/B** and **Robert Hager '92BS '93BS/B** were married September 11 at Fort Monroe in Hampton. The Hagers live in Richmond.

**Wesley Lawton '92BA/A** is a student at the Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington. He had a solo art exhibit at the Seminary's Dadian Gallery from December 15 through January 4.

**Roger Leibowitz '91MBA/B** and Kimberly Shefferman were married November 7 in McLean. Roger is employed by Compulife in Richmond, where the couple lives.

**Suzanne Lemons '91BS/C&PA** married **Matthew Wieringo '90BFA/A** September 11 in Richmond. Suzanne is an assistant manager at Lane Bryant and Matthew works for Presentation Resource of Richmond.

**Martin Mann '92BFA/A** and Celeste Hollandsworth were married October 16 in Martinsville. Martin works at Blockbuster Video in Danville, where the couple lives.

**Marie Martin '90BGA/NTS** and Wayne Mitchell were married September 11 in Altavista. Marie is a special events coordinator for Marithe & Francois Girbaud in Greensboro, NC. The couple lives in High Point, NC.

**Jennifer Marwitz '90BA/H&S** has joined the Richmond law firm of Sands, Anderson, Marks & Miller as an associate attorney on the firm's Workman Compensation Team.



# WRESTLING THE ANGEL

Helen Brake McGrath '94BGS/NTS

VCU/Nontraditional Studies Alumni Association Achievement Award 1994

BY MARIKA L. BYRD '92BGS/NTS

"It was overwhelming that I was rewarded for doing what I enjoy and the honor surprised me. It brought me back to life and gave me new hope," said Helen Brake McGrath. The VCU/Nontraditional Studies Alumni Association Board chose McGrath for the 1994 Achievement Award. During school, McGrath's studies and intense volunteer work focused on human services, particularly with children with chronic illness and their families. She plans to continue in graduate school.

In her application essay, McGrath follows two themes in her education—Exodus and Angel. "Two and a half years ago when I entered the NTS Program, I was stuck. I was mired in the results of a teenage marriage, an abusive relationship, single parenting of seven children and financial uncertainty. I was overwhelmed with life and felt helpless to extract myself. My children pushed me to apply to VCU and drove me to a NTS orientation led by Assistant Director Dorothy Fillmore. Months before applying to VCU, I had begun praying for healing for my family. My acceptance to VCU's NTS Program is part of that healing."

As a "displaced homemaker," McGrath "felt I had never done anything that would be valued or marketable." McGrath remembered novelist Virginia Woolf describing an negative internal presence and voice that was her greatest obstacle. Woolf called it "The Angel in the House." "This Angel has also been my foe," said McGrath. "This female voice told me: 'No, you can't. You don't deserve success. You'll never do it. You are neglecting your children.'"

It took quite a while, but Fillmore and Associate Director Dr. Sandra Nutall outtalked the Angel. At last McGrath was amazed at what she had accomplished while rearing seven natural children and two Asian foster children. Three of them have learning disabilities, one has a bilateral hearing loss, and one was chronically ill with a life-threatening condition. In spite of this, the oldest are now finishing college—one with a Master's in Engineering.

Dr. David Franks is struck that McGrath "is totally unaware of how outstanding she is." Nutall cited McGrath's "commendable organizational skills in multiple and sometimes conflicting responsible roles," and her 4.0 GPA. Professor Cliff Edwards says, "She has demonstrated outstanding courage dealing directly and intimately with dying persons and their families." Because of the quality of her insight and writing, Edwards is "convinced that we will be hearing a good deal more of Ms. McGrath and her work." McGrath was named to Who's Who Among Students in American Colleges and Universities for 1993 and inducted into the National Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi.

"To say that the NTS Program parted the Red Sea might be a bit dramatic, but it met me where I was and gave me an opportunity to find my way out of a situation that had been for me a kind of bondage: Exodus. It empowered my hopelessness and renewed my spirit," McGrath declares.

MARIKA BYRD IS THE SECRETARY OF THE NTS ALUMNI ASSOCIATION BOARD.

*Floored.* Helen McGrath with her children, who urged her to enroll at VCU. On the couch are: (l-r) Michael (16), Mark (19), Page (26), Larissa (Sean's wife), Sean (28), Sara (14), Brian (23), and Hanna (12), taken at Brian's December graduation from North Carolina State University.





# NORTH CAROLINA ALUMNI RECEPTION & REUNION

Approximately 100 alumni and their guests met President Trani and each other at Alumni Receptions held in Raleigh, Winston-Salem, and Charlotte on March 7, 8, and 9. George Habel '75/MC hosted the Raleigh event at the Capital City Club, Chris Mandalanis '77/B hosted the Winston-Salem event at the Piedmont Club, and Helen J. Ellis '54/M hosted the Charlotte reception at the Tower Club.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY THE  
CAPTURED IMAGE.



Vice President for Advancement Peter Wyeth (center) shares a laugh with Jeff Arthur, '88/MC (left) and event host George Habel '75/MC.

Petersburg. The couple lives in Mt. Solon, VA.

Tom Nicely '91BS/B was featured in the December issue of Virginia Business in an article on companies which pay for employees' continuing education. Tom works for Pioneer Federal Bank.

Keith Parker '91BA/H&S '93MURP/C&PA has joined Greater Richmond Transit Company as director of planning. Keith manages the company's Planning Department and oversees use of federal, state and local grants. He is a member of the American Planning Association, the Virginia Planning Association and Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.

Richard Perry Jr '92MBA/B and Megan Reed '91MHA/AH (HA) were married October 23 in Norfolk, where the couple lives. Richard works at Virginia Beach Federal Savings Bank and Megan at Sentara Norfolk General.

Glenda Ramsey '90BS/H&S has completed the Navy's Officer Indoctrination School. Topics of study included naval history and traditions, military law and personnel administration. Glenda joined the Navy in 1991.

Grace Renn '92BFA/A appeared in the cable television movie Broken Chain about the collapse of the Iriquois Confederacy. The movie was shot on location in Virginia.

Joni Shelton '91MED/E and Leonard Pritchard were married November 20 in Richmond. Joni works for the Hanover County School system. The couple lives in Glen Allen.

Stephen H. Smith '93BS/H&S and Rebecca Winokur



Event host George Habel '75/MC (l) thanks R. Scott Walker '91/H&S and his wife Karen Walker '90/H&S for attending the reception.

were married October 2 in Richmond, where they live. Stephen works at Fox Meyer.

Elizabeth Sousa '93BA/H&S and Donald Rhodes Jr were married September 18 in Richmond. Elizabeth works at River Road Antiques. The couple lives in Williamsburg.

Patricia Strong '92BS/C&PA and Henry Foster were married September 4 in Martinsville. Patricia works for Citizens Against Family Violence. The Fosters live in Axton, VA.

Eric Surratt '91BS/B married Shanna Walton November 6 in Colonial Heights. Eric works for Circuit City, Innsbrook, in Richmond, where the couple lives.

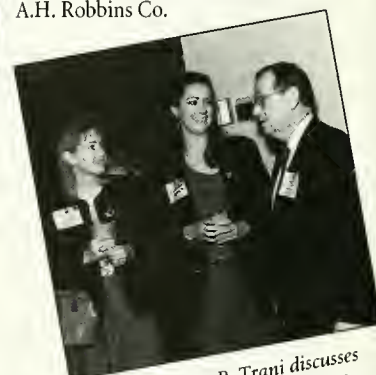
Karen Swanner '92MSW/SW married Hillery Schanck September 25 in Virginia Beach, where the couple lives. Karen is a social worker at United Methodist Family Service.

Cindy Tate '93BS/H&S married David Hall '93BS/H&S in December in Staunton. David

is a graduate student in sports management at the University of West Florida, where he is also the intramural coordinator and a teaching assistant. The Halls live in Pensacola.

Katherine Wallace '90BFA/A married James Breakell September 25 on the Eastern Shore. Katherine works at Mill Mountain Theatre. The couple lives in Roanoke.

Donna Wiles '92BS/H&S married Eric Lawson '92BA/H&S September 25 in Danville. Donna works in the contract division of This End Up Furniture and Eric works in the Dalcon Shield Claimants Trust department of A.H. Robbins Co.



President Eugene P. Trani discusses upcoming campus plans with Julie Vorobiov '82/B and Cynthia Ball '81/B.

\*Vivian Wilmouth '92MSW/SW married Bryan Horn October 16 in Roanoke. Vivian works at the Department of Medical Assistance Services in Richmond, where they live.

## Obituaries

### 1930s

Jeanette Heath '35BS/H&S summer 1993 in Lovingson, VA.

### 1950s

William Dietrich Jr '56BS/H&S May 8, 1993 in Richmond.

Susan Hawkins '59MSW/SW May 4, 1993.

## RPI ALERT

### RPI Reunion Weekend April 28-30, 1995.

All RPI alumni will be honored, and we hope to see all RPI classes represented.

So mark your calendars now, make your plane reservations—and poke around in your closets.

The Alumni Association is looking for RPI memorabilia to display. Pull out the old pennants, freshman beanies, those copies of the *Wigwam*, *Cobblestone* and *Proscript*.

Let's share our history and memories. Please notify Bill Hles, director of alumni activities, of your finds.

Contact him at  
(804) VCU-ALUM

(828-2586);

fax (804) 828-0878;

email

mercerc@cabell.vcu.edu;

or P.O. Box 843044,

Richmond VA 23284-3044.

## 1960s

Carson Morris '61BS/H&S

March 20 in Collinsville, VA.

Phyllis Grove Murray

'63BS/H&S '78MED/E September  
in Richmond.

## 1970s

Robert Banks '78BFA/A

November 26 in Richmond.

Thomas Collins Jr '77BS/B

'91MBA/B in Richmond on

December 29.

Mamie Farley '73BS/B

December 18, 1989 in Richmond.

J. Allen Minetree III

'73BS/MC April 11 in Houston.

A. Gordon Thomas '76BS/B

died in a hiking accident last July.

He is survived by his wife Camille.

## 1990s

Paulette Jones '92BA/H&S in

November in Danville.

John Pitts '91BS/B May 22,

1993 in Richmond.

### Key To Abbreviations

Alumni are identified by year  
degree/school

### Schools, Colleges, Divisions

A Arts

AH Allied Health Professions

B Business

BH Basic Health Sciences

C&PA Community and Public  
Affairs

D Dentistry

E Education

H&S Humanities and Sciences

M Medicine

MC Mass Communications

N Nursing

NTS Nontraditional Studies

Program/Continuing Studies  
and Public Service

P Pharmacy

SW Social Work

### Other abbreviations

C.Certificate

BGS Bachelor of General Studies

BFA, MFA Bachelor, Master of  
Fine Art

HLD Honorary Doctor of  
Humane Letters

# WHAT'S NEW?

*Shafer Court Connections* welcomes updates on marriages, family additions, job changes, relocations, promotions—whatever you think is newsworthy. Help us keep track of you by completing and returning this form.

Recent newspaper clippings and photographs are also appreciated. Please mail to **VCU Alumni Activities,**

**310 North Shafer Street, P. O. Box 843044, Richmond, Virginia 23284-3044.**

NAME/DEGREE/CLASS

SPDUSE'S FULL NAME/(IF APPLIES) DEGREE/CLASS

CHILDREN (INDICATE IF CURRENTLY ATTENDING VCU)

PREFERRED MAILING ADDRESS

HOME PHONE

☐ CHECK HERE IF NEW ADDRESS

JOB TITLE

EMPLOYER

BUSINESS ADDRESS

WORK PHONE

NEWS

**Important Note:** If this magazine is addressed to an alumnus who no longer lives at the address provided on the address label, please advise us so that we can correct our records. If you know the person's correct address, we would appreciate that information. Also, if a husband and wife are receiving more than one copy of the magazine, we would like to know so that we can avoid duplicate mailings. Please provide the names of both individuals plus the wife's maiden name, if appropriate.

☐ I am interested in sponsoring an extern. Please send an information form



# Welcome to 4,300 \*New Alumni!



*\*Double congratulations to all of you earning second and third degrees.*

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